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THE
A R G U M E N T S
OF THE
BOOKS AND CHAPTERS
OF THE
OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT,
WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

WRITTEN ORIGINALLY IN FRENCH,
BY THE REVEREND MR. OSTERVALD,
PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY, AND ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF
THE CHURCH AT NEUFCHATEL, IN SWISSERLAND:

AND BY HIM PRESENTED TO THE
SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

TRANSLATED BY
JOHN CHAMBERLAYNE, ESQ.

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VOL. II.  
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THE
BOOK
SONG
OF
SOLOMON.

ARGUMENT.

The Author of the Song of Songs is Solomon. What we read in this Book, taken literally, seems to be a description of the love which Solomon and his queen had for each other. But this Song must be understood in a spiritual and mystical sense; and so indeed have all the ancient doctors, both Jews and Christians, understood it. In this Book is represented, in figurative and allegorical expressions, the mutual love of Christ and his Church, which is called in Scripture his spouse, and the sentiments which this love produces in the hearts of all true believers: In this light we must consider what is contained in this Book.

THE
BOOK
OF THE PROPHET
I S A I A H.

ARGUMENT.

The prophet Isaiah lived about 800 years before the coming of our Saviour; and prophesied about sixty years in the kingdom of Judea. There is great strength and majesty in his exhortations, in his reproofs, and in his threatnings. In this Book there are several predictions relating to the Jews, and other neighbouring nations; and it is to be observed, that of all the prophets, Isaiah has spoke the most clearly of Jesus Christ, of his sufferings, of his kingdom, and of the calling of the Gentiles.

CHAP. I.

I. *I S A I A H* reproaches the *Jews* for their ingratitude, and extreme corruption, which would shortly occasion their utter ruin. II. He reproves them for their hypocrisy, and vain confidence in sacrifices and external worship. III. He exhorts them to repentance, and declares, that if they would be converted, God would pardon and bless them; but if they continued in their disobedience, they would be destroyed. Lastly, He complains of the corruption of the city of *Jerusalem*; and particularly, that the
magif-

magistrates and rulers were given to injustice; and declares, that God would soon take vengeance on them for all these sins; and that the *Jews* should be deprived of all the privileges they enjoyed.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

WHEN we read the prophet's reproaches of the *Jews* for their ingratitude, we are led to consider, that God, in admitting us into the bosom of his church, and adopting us for his children, has conferred greater favours on us than on his ancient people: and therefore we shall be infinitely more guilty, and expose ourselves to more heavy chastisements, if we ungratefully rebel against him. II. God declares in this chapter, that it is in vain to worship him in publick, and attend on him in the religious assemblies, and practise the most solemn acts of devotion, whilst we live in sin, and that God abhors such worship. III. This chapter teaches us, that the only way to avoid the wrath of God, is to purify our hearts by repentance, to cease from doing evil, and learn to do well; that God is always ready graciously to receive sinners that are converted; but that the disobedient and hardened shall perish in their impenitency. IV. It must be observed, that *Isaiah* particularly complained of the depravity of the judges and magistrates of *Jerusalem*, saying, that they were companions of thieves, that they loved gifts, and followed after rewards. These censures and the threatenings denounced against wicked magistrates, prove, that sins committed by persons of a publick character are usually attended with a general corruption, and with the most severe judgments of God; and that, on the contrary, it is a great blessing on cities and states, when God sets over them just and upright rulers.

CHAP. II.

THE prophet foretels in this chapter, I. That all nations should be called to the knowledge and

service of the true God. II. That God would reject the *Jews*, because of their idolatry and other sins. III. That he would destroy, by his almighty power, those that set themselves against him; and that he would abolish idolatry.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter contains three prophecies; the first of which foretold the calling of the Gentiles; the second the rejection of the *Jews*; and the third the destruction of the wicked, who are the enemies of God. We see the completion of these prophecies. The several nations of the world have been called to the knowledge of the true God by the Gospel, and are come into the church, and made partakers of the covenant of God; the *Jews* have been rejected, by reason of their sins, and their incredulity; and God has in all times confounded the pride and power of the ungodly, and the enemies of his kingdom. The use then we should make of reading this chapter is, to be very sensible of the great advantage we enjoy in being in the number of those whom God has admitted into his church; and to express our gratitude by a sincere endeavour to know his will, by serving him with purity and zeal, and by walking in his way. We should improve, by the example of the *Jews*, and by the judgments which are denounced against those who oppose God, lest by our rebellion we expose ourselves to those dreadful judgments, which he will pour upon the wicked, and on all those who do not reverence his power.

CHAP. III.

ISAIAH foretels the utter destruction of the inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, and of the kingdom of *Judah*; which, he says, would come upon them for their sins; and chiefly for the injustice which the rulers of the people openly committed, and the luxury and immodesty of the women of *Jerusalem*.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

THE prophet foretels in this chapter, that in those troublesome times the *Jewish* nation should be extremely diminished; but that God would restore the remnant of that people, sanctify, and protect them.

REFLECTIONS on chapters iii. and iv.

THESE chapters teach us, I. That God withdraws his protection from nations that provoke him by their sins; and that he punishes them, particularly, by setting over them rulers that know not how to govern well. II. That when men, instead of concealing their sins, proclaim them openly, and, instead of being ashamed of them, commit them without reserve, there is reason to believe the judgments of God are not far off. III. That among the sins which provoke the wrath of God, he is, above all, offended with the injustice committed by persons of a publick character, and with luxury and pride. The description is very remarkable which *Isaiah* here gives of the luxury and vanity of the maidens and women of *Jerusalem*, their various ornaments, their wanton attire, their immodesty, their pride, their soft and dissolute lives. We here see, that idleness and luxury were introduced into *Jerusalem*, with other sins; and the prophet expressly declares that this would be one cause of the ruin of the *Jews*, and of the miseries that were going to fall upon them. This leaves no room to doubt but luxury is very odious in the sight of God, and still more odious in Christians than in the *Jews*, and that when immodesty, idleness, vanity, effeminacy, and a love of pleasures generally prevail, they are a sure mark of a great corruption, and forerunners of the divine judgments. Lastly, God gives here tokens of his goodness, in promising that after the *Jews* had been chastised, he would restore and sanctify them. This he did, when he delivered them from their enemies, who were shortly to attack them; when he re-

covered them from the *Babylonish* captivity; and chiefly, by sending his Son into the world, to bless them, and to redeem them from their sins.

CHAP. V.

I. *ISAIAH* represents, by the similitude of a well cultivated but barren vine, the care God had taken of the *Jews*, the ingratitude of that people, and the judgments that were shortly to fall upon them. II. He particularizes the chief sins of that nation, which were covetousness, injustice, drunkenness, love of pleasures, contempt of God's judgments, profaneness, and the iniquity of judges in taking bribes to corrupt them. III. The prophet foretels, that the *Jews* should be punished for all these sins, and that distant nations, as the *Assyrians* and *Chaldeans*, should come against *Jerusalem*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE complaints which God makes of the ingratitude and disobedience of the *Jews*, which he represents by the similitude of a barren vine, plainly teach us, that God does all that is necessary for the good of men; that he makes use of the most proper means to engage them to love and fear him; that therefore he is not the author of their ruin; and that if they perish, it is wholly owing to their own fault. This comparison teaches us likewise, that when men abuse the methods that God takes to render them happy, he deprives them of them, and forsakes them. Besides this, it appears from this chapter, that there are some sins which in a particular manner expose men to the divine vengeance; as covetousness, and an immoderate desire of riches; drunkenness, the love of mirth, feasting, and pleasures; security, and a contempt of the divine threatenings, impious opinions and discourses, and the injustice committed by judges and magistrates. The *Jews* were delivered into the hands of the *Chaldeans* for these sins; and we may see by their example, that

CHAP. VI.

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when men give themselves up to work wickedness, they are infallibly exposed to God's wrath.

CHAP. VI.

THE prophet relates a vision, in which God appeared to him in his glory, and commanded him to speak to the *Jews* in his name, and to declare to them, that since their obstinacy was past remedy, their cities should be laid waste; but that nevertheless their ruin should not be past recovery.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are two things in this chapter which chiefly demand our serious attention. I. The magnificent vision which the prophet *Isaiah* had, wherein he saw the Lord seated upon his throne, and surrounded by his holy angels, who celebrated his holiness and infinite majesty. By this remarkable vision, which filled the prophet with fear and trembling, God designed to confirm him in his calling as a prophet, and prepare him to say and do whatever he should command. The account given us of this vision should inspire us with a great reverence and dread of the majesty of God, and stir us up to praise and adore him continually with the angels, saying, with profound humility: *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory.* II. We must observe, that what is here said of the blindness and obstinacy of the *Jews*, is not to be understood as if God had blinded them, and hardened their hearts. God only informs the prophet what would be the success of his ministry, and foretels that the *Jews* would harden themselves wilfully. We ought never to attribute to God the sin and obstinacy of men, since he is so far from blinding and hardening them, that he does all that is necessary to enlighten them, to convert and save them: and if they continue in their sins, and perish in them, it is wholly owing to their own wickedness, and because they would have it so.

CHAP. VII.

AHAZ, king of *Judah*, being attacked by *Rezin*, king of *Syria*, and *Pekah*, king of *Israel*, God sends *Isaiah* to him, to assure him that he would defend *Jerusalem*, and that the kingdoms of *Syria* and *Israel* should be soon destroyed. II. The prophet, to give *Ahaz* the stronger assurance that the kingdom of *Judah* should not be delivered into the hands of the enemies that attacked him, foretels the extraordinary birth of a child. III. He declares, that the kingdom of *Israel* should be ravaged by the *Egyptians*, and *Assyrians*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE care which God took to send *Isaiah* to *Ahaz*, who was a wicked and idolatrous king, to promise him protection against the kings of *Syria* and *Israel*, who made war upon him, is an instance of the goodness of God towards men, even those that offend him, and of his love to his people. *Isaiah* exhorts *Ahaz* and his subjects not to fear those two smoking firebrands, as he in contempt calls the kings of *Syria* and *Israel*; and, in fact, these two kings, who intended to invade the kingdom of *Judah*, were themselves destroyed soon after, with their kingdoms. There is, in this chapter, a remarkable prediction; the prophet says, that *within threescore and five years, Ephraim, that is, the Israelites of the ten tribes, should be broken, that it be no more a people.* This came to pass at the end of that term, when *Esharhaddon*, king of *Assyria*, sent strangers to dwell in the land of *Israel*, in the room of the *Israelites*, who had remained there pretty numerous after *Salmaneser*, king of *Assyria*, had destroyed the kingdom of the ten tribes. The behaviour of *Ahaz*, who rejected the promises and offers that *Isaiah* made him from God, shews us, that if it be tempting God to expect what he has not promised, it is no less offending him not to believe his promises,

nor to receive the offers of his favour. However, we here find, that God, notwithstanding *Ahaz's* refusal, told him by *Isaiah*, that in a very short time, and before a young son of that prophet had any knowledge, *Jerusalem* should be delivered from both the kings who made war against it. But what is most remarkable is, that *Isaiah* then foretold that a virgin should bring forth a son. This prophecy relates to *Jesus Christ*, and is applied to him in the Gospel, as he alone was born of a virgin; and to him alone can be ascribed what *Isaiah* saith of this extraordinary child, and the august titles given him in this and the following chapters. Farther, as the Messiah, whose birth is here predicted, was to be of the family of king *David*, this prophecy tended to assure the *Jews*, that God would not suffer that family, and the kingdom of *Judah*, who were then attacked, to be destroyed by their enemies.

CHAP. VIII.

I. *ISAIAH* continues to prophesy, that the attempts of the kings of *Syria* and *Israel* against *Jerusalem* would be in vain; and that before a son which was born to him should be of an age to understand, the *Assyrians* should come against those two kingdoms, and pass on even to the kingdom of *Judah*.
 II. He exhorts the *Jews* to put their trust in God; and fear none but him; to cleave to his word, and not to have recourse to forcerers nor idols. He speaks, lastly, of the desolation that should at that time befall those *Jews* which dwelt in *Galilee*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE repeated assurances which *Isaiah* gave king *Ahaz* and the *Jews*, that they should be delivered from the kings of *Syria* and *Israel*, shew, that God defeats the attempt which the enemies of his church form against it, and that he renders their contrivances vain and ineffectual; and therefore that in God alone

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we ought to place our fear and our trust. The event answered the prediction: *Tiglath-pileser*, king of the *Affyrians*, came to *Ahaz's* assistance, took the city of *Damascus*, which was the capital of the kingdom of *Syria*, slew *Rezin* their king, and in him put an end to that kingdom. *Tiglath-pileser* took also part of the kingdom of *Israel*, and carried the people captive into *Affyria*; but made *Ahaz* king of *Judah* tributary. Some time after, *Salmaneser*, who succeeded *Tiglath-pileser*, totally destroyed the kingdom of *Israel*; and at the end of eight years, *Sennacherib*, another king of *Affyria*, made war upon the kingdom of *Judah*, under the reign of *Hezekiah*, son of *Ahaz*: He even besieged *Jerusalem*, but in vain, since God protected and miraculously delivered that city. Thus all that *Isaiah* had foretold was fulfilled. In the second part of this chapter, the prophet very strongly condemns those, who, in the danger the *Jews* were then in, instead of applying to God and his word, had recourse to forcerers, and to the dead. From whence it appears, that it is a great crime, and extreme impiety, to consult forcerers, and those who pretend to foretel things to come; and that those who give credit to such persons, and make use of such damnable methods, forsake God. This teaches us likewise, that we ought to have no other support of our trust, or rule of our faith, than God's word. Lastly, It is to be observed, that if *Galilee*, where the tribes of *Zabulun* and *Nephtali* were situated, was the first that was laid waste by the *Affyrians*, that country had afterwards the happiness to be the first that was enlightened by the Gospel; *Jesus Christ's* most usual abode being in *Galilee*, as we are taught by St. *Matthew*, in the fourth chapter of his Gospel, where he applies to the inhabitants of *Galilee* the last words of this, and the first words of the following chapter.

CHAP. IX.

THIS chapter has two parts. I. *Isaiah* foretels, that God would deliver *Jerusalem*, and the kingdom of *Judah*, and establish an everlasting kingdom in the family of *David*, by a son which should be born to him. II. He prophesies, that the kingdom of *Israel*, which at that time made war against that of *Judah*, should be humbled by the *Syrians* and *Philistines*, and by the king of *Assyria*.

REFLECTIONS.

WE read in the beginning of this chapter, *the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light*; which words were fulfilled, not only in the deliverance which God formerly vouchsafed the *Jews*, when he defended them against their enemies, but chiefly in the favour granted to that people, and afterwards to other nations, in causing the light of his Gospel to shine upon them, when they were in the darkness of sin, and of death. This happy change was wrought by the coming of *Jesus Christ* the Son of God, whose glory, divinity, and eternal kingdom, are here described in terms so clear and remarkable, and which can be applied to no other. II. We are next to observe what *Isaiah* prophesied, that God would display divers judgments upon the *Israelites*, by means of the *Syrians* and their other neighbours; and that because they would not turn to him that smote them, but even soothed themselves in their sins, he would send them new and greater calamities, *and that his anger should not be turned away, but his hand still stretched out against them*. This teaches us, that God afflicts men to bring them to him; that when they harden themselves, he doubles the stroke of his rod; and therefore, that the only way to turn away his wrath, is to profit by his chastisements, to be converted, and humbled.

CHAP. X.

I. THIS chapter contains threatnings against those who oppress others by violence and injustice; and particularly against the *Assyrians*, whom the prophet foretels God would make use of to punish the kingdom of *Israel*; and that they should think to become masters even of *Jerusalem*, as they had conquered *Calno*, and some other cities here mentioned. But the prophet adds, that after they had executed the designs of the Almighty, he would punish them for their injustice and pride. II. He comforts the inhabitants of *Jerusalem* against the fear of the king of *Assyria*, by promising them that God would redeem the remnant of his people.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may gather in general from this chapter, that violent proud, and unjust men, are threatened with the curse of God. But what we are chiefly to observe here is, that God thought fit to make use of the king of *Assyria* to punish the *Israelites*; that this prince was to accomplish the designs of God without knowing it; that he would boast of his success, and even threaten to reduce *Jerusalem*; but that afterwards God would destroy him, because he had unjustly attacked the *Israelites*, and out of a principle of pride, and because he had attributed his victories to his own wisdom and strength. In this chapter, which is very remarkable, we see plainly, that although God lets the wicked alone, and employs them to chastise men, and to execute his designs, he nevertheless punishes them justly for doing it; since their actions are voluntary and free, and the end they propose is only to gratify their own passions, and not to fulfil the designs of Providence. This should teach us to adore the ways of God's providence, and to confess, that he presides over all things, even over the criminal and unjust actions of the wicked; but that, however, he is by no means

means the author of the sins which men commit ; that he has a right to punish them, and that he will infallibly do it. These considerations, which perfectly vindicate the ways of God's providence, teach us not to fear the power and malice of men, and to trust always in him. *Isaiah* says, in this chapter, *That a remnant of Israel should return* ; which describes not only what happened to those who were delivered from the king of *Assyria*, or from the *Babylonish* captivity, but this relates in general to those *Jews* who were saved by believing in *Jesus Christ*, while the rest were rejected. This is *St. Paul's* application of these words of *Isaiah*, in the Epistle to the *Romans* : *Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved.*

CHAP. XI.

I. **T**HE prophet in this chapter foretels, that although the kingdom and family of *David* were to be brought low, and reduced to a very abject condition by their enemies ; yet God would preserve that family, and raise up a great king, and put his spirit upon him. II. He represents, in figurative expressions, the kingdom of the Messiah, under whom the whole earth should be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. III. He promises, that God would again display in behalf of his people, to recover them from the several countries where they should be dispersed, the same power which he had displayed when he brought them out of the land of *Egypt*.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT is said in this chapter may be applied to that which God did in behalf of the family of king *David* and of the *Jews*, under the reign of good king *Hezekiah*, when he preserved them from the enemies which then attacked them ; and when he afterwards brought back the remnant of that people from the several countries where they had been dispersed. But
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the true sense of the prophecy is, that the Messiah was to spring from the posterity of *David*: that the spirit of God should rest upon him, with his most extraordinary gifts; that his kingdom was to be a spiritual and heavenly kingdom; and that the design of this kingdom would be to reconcile all men, to make them live in peace, and to fill the whole earth with the knowledge of the Lord. These are so many signs which prove that *Jesus* is the Messiah who was to come, these are powerful motives to engage us to submit to his kingdom, to live in peace and unity, and, by leading a holy life, to acknowledge God's mercy to us, in giving us the knowledge of himself, and redeeming us by *Jesus Christ*.

CHAP. XII.

IN this chapter the prophet adds a song of thanksgiving for the great salvation with which God was to visit his people.

REFLECTIONS.

WE have in this chapter a pattern of the praises and thanksgivings which Christians ought to render to God continually for that great deliverance which he has vouchsafed unto them, in redeeming them by his Son *Jesus Christ*.

CHAP. XIII.

THE contents of the preceding chapters relate to the state of the *Jews*, when they were attacked by their enemies, in the reign of *Ahaz*, and foretels what would befall them, as well as the kingdom of *Israel*. The thirteenth and following chapters contain prophecies against the nations and kingdoms who should afflict the people of God. In this chapter he foretels, that the *Babylonians* would be subdued by the *Medes* and *Persians*.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS general reflection is to be made on this and the following chapters to the twenty-fourth, and upon several other parts of this Book ; that the predictions of *Isaiah* did not only relate to the *Jews*, but that God commanded him likewise to prophesy against other nations, even the most powerful empires, such as was at that time the *Babylonish* ; and to commit his prophecies to writing. God was pleased thus to order it, for the instruction and consolation of the *Jews*, and to convince all men, in ages to come, that he is the Almighty God, the Lord of kings and nations. This is a mark of majesty and greatness, which should be well observed in these prophecies ; and is the more remarkable, as all the threatenings denounced therein against the several nations were put in execution. On this thirteenth chapter it must be observed, that as the *Babylonians* were to take *Jerusalem*, burn the temple, and carry the people into captivity, God, to give the *Jews* a right sense of this great event, and for their consolation, was pleased to declare long beforehand, that the empire of the *Babylonians* should be destroyed. This prediction is very wonderful : *Isaiah* expressly declares, that *Babylon* should be taken at a time, and in a manner, which the *Babylonians* could not have foreseen ; that it should be utterly destroyed, and never recover from its ruins, but become a retreat for wild beasts. *Isaiah* foretels this two hundred years before, when the *Babylonish* empire was in the most flourishing condition ; at the end of which time *Babylon* was taken by the *Medes* and *Persians*, as we learn from the fifth chapter of *Daniel*, and from profane history. This prophecy affords us the clearest conviction of the divine authority of the Sacred Writings ; it proves, that God was the director of all these great events. We here remark the divine justice against the *Babylonians*, who had so unjustly oppressed the *Jews* ; and, lastly, we see that God graciously protects

protects his church. These predictions, which, when they were pronounced, had a natural tendency to comfort the *Jews*, should make still greater impression upon us, as they have been since so exactly fulfilled; and they furnish us with the most convincing proofs of the divinity of the prophecies contained in this Book.

CHAP. XVI.

I. *ISAIAH* foretels the deliverances and restoration of the *Jews*. II. He declares, that God would destroy the *Babylonians* by his power, for their pride and cruelty, though they trusted in their own strength. III. He threatens likewise the *Philistines* with total destruction.

REFLECTIONS.

THE promises which *Isaiah* made to the *Jews*, shew, that if the prophets had a commission to threaten them, they were also sent to comfort them, with an assurance that God would be reconciled with them. Thus has God always given proofs of his goodness, at the same time that he has given tokens of his justice. *Isaiah's* description of the insupportable pride of the *Babylonians*, of their formidable power, and the extent of their dominions, should lead us to consider, that how great soever the power of the kings of the earth, and the enemies of the church may be, it can never hold out against God; and that his justice is engaged to confound the proud and unjust. This should teach us humility and confidence in God; since pride is not less odious in private persons than in princes and nations. Again, the destruction of the city and empire of *Babylon* very evidently proves the truth and divinity of *Isaiah's* prophecies. The prophet mentions one very remarkable circumstance; which is, that this great and pompous city should become pools of water, and a dwelling for wild beasts; which actually came to pass afterwards, as we are informed

formed by history. The destruction of the *Philistines*, the ancient enemies of God's people, presents us with the same reflections; which came to pass in the reign of *Hezekiah*, a few years after *Isaiah* had prophesied against them.

CHAP. XV.

ISAIAH, in this and the following chapter, prophesies against the *Moabites*; foretels the taking of the principal cities, *Ar* and *Kir*, and others here mentioned; and declares that their country should be reduced to the utmost extremity.

CHAP. XVI.

THE prophet in this chapter says, the *Moabites* should send lambs, that is, a tribute to the king of *Jerusalem*; that the *Israelites* should dwell in their own land; and that all this should happen to punish the pride and insolence of the *Moabites*; and lastly, he takes notice, that these threatenings should be accomplished in three years.

REFLECTIONS on chapters xv. and xvi.

THE prophecy concerning the destruction of the *Moabites* was fulfilled at the exact time mentioned by *Isaiah*, when *Salmaneser*, king of *Assyria*, made war upon the *Israelites*. This prince took possession of the kingdom of *Moab*, and the *Moabites* became afterwards tributaries to the kingdom of *Judah*, and did homage to *Hezekiah*, after the *Assyrians* had been defeated in that king's reign. All these events God was pleased to foretel, to convince the *Jews* of the truth of all that the prophets declared, and to teach them, that his providence ruled over all things. The same instructions we may receive from several other prophecies of the like nature. In the desolation of the *Moabites* we should likewise consider the just punishment of their pride, and of the injuries they had

done to the *Jews*, and the care which God has, in all ages, been graciously pleased to take of his people.

CHAP. XVII.

THE prophet foretels of the ruin of *Damascus*, the capital of the kingdom of *Syria*, which is called the fortress of *Ephraim*: that is, the defence of the *Israelites* of the ten tribes, who had put themselves under the protection of the king of *Syria*. He denounces the destruction of the ten tribes themselves, because they had forsaken the true God to serve idols.

REFLECTIONS.

IN the sixteenth chapter of the Second Book of Kings, we read an account of the destruction of the kingdom of *Damascus*, foretold by *Isaiah*. *Tiglath-pileser*, king of the *Assyrians*, took that city, laid it waste, carried the inhabitants into captivity, and put their king to death; and a few years after, the kingdom of *Israel*, having made a league with the *Assyrians* against the kingdom of *Judah*, was likewise subdued and totally extinguished by the same *Assyrians*, who had conquered *Damascus*. By this means the *Syrians* and the *Israelites*, who had unjustly attacked the king of *Judah*, were punished for their injustice, as *Isaiah* had several times foretold; and the *Israelites* in particular received the punishment which their idolatry justly merited. Thus the divine justice, and the truth of *Isaiah's* predictions, appeared in the destruction of both these kingdoms.

CHAP. XVIII.

THIS chapter is attended with obscurity, and it is difficult to say with certainty what is the precise meaning of it, by reason of the figurative expressions we meet with in it, which may be explained more ways than one; and because history does not afford us sufficient light on this subject. However, the most probable

probable interpretation seems to be, that the king of *Ethiopia*, when he was going to march against the king of *Assyria*, who had attacked the *Jews*, would invite the *Egyptians* to join him; but that God would confound the designs of the *Assyrians*, and deliver *Jerusalem* by his own power alone.

REFLECTIONS.

IN the nineteenth chapter of the Second Book of Kings, we find the two events which the prophet *Isaiah* here takes notice of. One is, that *Tirhakah*, king of *Ethiopia*, came with his army against *Sennacherib*, king of *Assyria*, who at that time was besieging *Jerusalem*. The other is, that *Sennacherib*'s army was utterly destroyed by an angel; and that prince, returning to his own country, perished in a miserable manner. God therefore himself, and not the king of *Ethiopia*, was the deliverer of *Jerusalem*, and took vengeance on the *Assyrians*; wherein he displayed his infinite power, and his love for his people.

CHAP. XIX.

THIS chapter is a prophecy against the *Egyptians*, which foretels, I. Their confusion and dissention among themselves, till a powerful king should execute the judgments of God against them. II. He foretels, that *Egypt* should come to the knowledge and worship of the true God.

REFLECTIONS.

HISTORY perfectly clears the predictions contained in this chapter. After the death of *Sethon*, king of *Egypt*, the *Egyptians* had twelve kings, who were at war together a long time; after which, all *Egypt* was under the dominion of one prince only, named *Psammitichus*. The *Egyptians* were afterwards attacked by the king of *Assyria*, and by *Nebuchadnezzar*, who subdued them; and in some time *Egypt*,
c 2
Judah,

Judah, and *Assyria*, were governed by the same monarch. At the end of this chapter *Isaiah*, says, that the cities in the land of *Egypt* should speak the language of *Canaan*; that there should be an altar to the Lord in that land, and that the *Egyptians* should call upon God and do sacrifice to him. This relates first, to what happened when the *Jews* retired into *Egypt*, after the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and afterwards built a temple there, called the temple of *Onias*, which engaged many of the *Egyptians* to worship the true God. But this prophecy was not fully completed till the times of the Gospel, when the *Egyptians* and other nations were converted, and by that means accounted the people of God as well as the *Israelites*.

CHAP. XX.

GOD commands *Isaiah* to walk barefoot and naked, that is, without his robe, having on only his under garments; to signify, that in three years the *Egyptians* and the *Ethiopians* should be led into captivity naked and barefoot, by the *Assyrians*; and that this should convince the *Jews*, that they had done wrong to imagine that the king of *Egypt* should deliver them from the king of *Assyria*.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS prophecy was verified when the king of *Assyria* carried his arms as far as *Egypt*, took several cities in it, and carried a great number of *Egyptians* captives into his own country. This must needs deceive the *Jews*, who trusted on the *Egyptians*, and teach them to trust in God only.

CHAP. XXI.

THIS chapter contains two predictions: The first is concerning the destruction of the *Babylonians*, who were to fall into the hands of the *Medes* and *Persians*. The second relates to the people of *Dumah* and

and the *Arabians* of *Kedar*, who were likewise to be exposed to the utmost miseries. The people of *Dumah* were of the posterity of the *Ishmaelites*.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter *Isaiah* foretels the taking of *Babylon* by the *Medes* and *Persians*: He calls them to besiege it and to conquer it; and expressly mentions their taking that city in a night, when the king of *Babylon* should be feasting, and taking his fill of pleasures. Thus it actually came to pass, as history informs us, and we read at the end of the fifth chapter of *Daniel*. This prophecy, which was pronounced so long beforehand, contains in it a most evident mark of majesty and divinity. The *Edomites* and *Arabians*, who are here mentioned, were also invaded by the *Assyrians*. By which God was pleased to punish the idolatry of those nations, and avenge the injuries they had done to the *Jews*.

CHAP. XXII.

AFTER the prophet had foretold, in the foregoing chapters, the destruction of those idolatrous people who had oppressed the *Jews*, he denounces in this chapter the miseries that would befall the *Jews* themselves, notwithstanding all the precautions taken by the inhabitants of *Jerusalem* to secure them from their enemies; and he says, that this would come upon them, because they had abandoned themselves to dissolute pleasures, at a time when God called them to repentance. *Isaiah* foretels likewise, that *Shebna*, one of king *Hezekiah*'s chief officers, when *Sennacherib* besieged *Jerusalem*, should be removed from his place, and that *Eliakim* should succeed him. What is here said of *Shebna*, gives room to suppose, that this prophecy relates to what happened when the *Assyrians* came against *Jerusalem*, and carried captive to *Babylon* *Manasseth*, the son of *Hezekiah*, as we read 2 *Chron.* xxxiii, 11,

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

THE threatenings which are here denounced against *Jerusalem* by the prophet, after he had threatened the other nations, shew, that God spares not his own people, and those who profess to serve him, when they offend him; and that the nations and cities, where impiety reigns, are at last exposed to his vengeance, which nothing can secure them from. But what is chiefly to be observed here is, that one of the greatest signs of hardness of heart, and that which most provokes God to punish men, is their being insensible of his judgments, and giving themselves up to mirth and pleasures, and dissoluteness, at a time when he calls them to humiliation and repentance. *Isaiah's* prediction of *Shebna's* being turned out, and *Eliakim's* being preferred, proves, that what happens to private persons is directed by Providence, as well as what befalls princes and nations; and that God exalts and abases whom he pleases, as may best answer his wise designs.

CHAP. XXIII.

THIS chapter foretels the humbling of the *Tyrians*, who were neighbours to the *Jews*, and prided themselves in their riches and power.

REFLECTIONS.

THE prediction contained in this chapter was fulfilled, when *Nebuchadnezzar*, after a tedious siege, took the city of *Tyre*. It is remarkable, that the prophet in this chapter, says expressly, that *Tyre* should be desolate seventy years; that at the end of that time it should be restored: that its trade should again flourish, and part of its riches be consecrated to God. All these things happened to the city of *Tyre*: After it had fallen under the power of the *Babylonians*, it recovered from its ruins, became very considerable,
and

and enjoyed its liberty in the time of *Alexander* the Great: After this the *Jews* reaped many advantages from the *Tyrians*, and at last, the Gospel was preached in the land of *Tyre*. In all this, we see evident proofs of the divinity of these prophecies, and that Providence governs the world, and presides over all events.

CHAP. XXIV.

THIS chapter treats of the extreme desolation of *Judea*, occasioned by the sins of the *Jews*. *Isaiah* promises, however, that *Jerusalem*, should be restored.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we find a prediction of the miseries that threatened the *Jews*. *Isaiah* declares, that their land would shortly be entirely desolate, because it had been profaned and defiled by the sins of its inhabitants, and they had broken the divine covenant. By this we see what they have reason to expect, who imitate the *Jews* in their rebellion and ingratitude. God at length puts in execution against them the decrees of his justice, and overwhelms them with his judgments; but if he does not always punish the transgressors of his covenant and laws with temporal punishments, he will infallibly punish them in the life to come; since the threatenings of the Gospel are not less express, nor less certain, than those of the ancient prophets. On the other hand, the promises God here makes, to establish his kingdom, and again to manifest his glory at *Jerusalem*, after he had afflicted it, express God's mercy to his people. These promises concern us, as well as the *Jews*, since we see their perfect completion in the manifestation of *Jesus Christ*, and the establishment of his kingdom.

CHAP. XXV.

THIS is a song of praise for the blessings which God would grant to his people, in delivering them, and humbling their enemies.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

THE praises and thanksgivings contained in this chapter relate, first, to the deliverance of the *Jews*, and their return from *Babylon*; but they chiefly suit that great deliverance, which the Messiah was one day to procure for men, by redeeming them, and purchasing salvation for them. We are chiefly to observe, after St. *Paul* and St. *John*, that these words of the prophet, *He will swallow up death in victory: and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces*; will not be fully accomplished till death, our last enemy, shall be destroyed by the resurrection, and *Jesus Christ* shall introduce his elect into eternal glory. This expectation ought to produce in us a great desire to partake of these excellent promises, and be a powerful motive to us, to bless the Lord who has promised them, and to be glad and rejoice continually in expectation of that salvation, which shall be fully revealed at the second coming of our Lord *Jesus Christ*.

CHAP. XXVI.

I. *ISAIAH* goes on to praise God for the blessings he would bestow on his people, and expresses the confidence which the righteous have in God. II. He represents how men abuse the forbearance of God; he adores his justice and power, which would appear in restoring peace to the *Jews*, after he had reduced them to the utmost extremity; and from all these considerations he comforts and encourages the people of God.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WE ought to meditate with faith and gratitude upon what is said in this chapter, and in so many other prophecies, of the deliverance and peace which God would send his church, since these predictions principally relate to the times of the Gospel. II. We learn

learn from this chapter, that the character of true believers is to trust in God alone, to desire nothing but him, and to seek him with all the powers of the soul; and that God, on his part, supports them and guides them in the way that they should go, and takes care of every thing that relates to them. III. Another instruction that the prophet gives us is, that men commonly learn to fear God, and to do that which is right, when he chastises them, and they see his judgments; but that the wicked abuse the forbearance of God, and are hardened in their sins, when he shews them favour; and instead of being converted, become yet more wicked. Lastly, The assurances which the prophet gives the *Jews* of the divine protection, should effectually comfort the church, and all its true members, make them easy in the worst of times, and fill them continually with hope and joy.

CHAP. XXVII.

GOD promises by his power to punish the enemies of the *Jews*, to be reconciled with his people, and to bring the dispersed in *Assyria* and *Egypt* again to *Jerusalem*, there to worship the Lord.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may gather from this chapter, I. That how great soever the power of the enemies of God be, he is more powerful than they, and will not fail to set bounds to their malice. II. That there is this difference between the afflictions with which God visits his church, and the judgments he displays against idolators; that God afflicts his church in pure kindness, to cleanse and purify it: whereas he punishes the other in his wrath, and for their destruction. This goodness of the Lord appears in the promises here made to gather together the dispersed *Jews*, and to bring them again to *Jerusalem*, which actually came to pass after the captivity of *Babylon*. This teaches us, that God does never intirely withdraw his grace and protection from

from his people, and from those he loves; and that after he has afflicted and humbled them, he restores them to rest and peace, and gives them new proofs of this love, and fresh reason to celebrate his mercy.

CHAP. XXVIII.

THIS is a prophecy against *Ephraim*; that is, against the kingdom of the ten tribes, and against the kingdom of *Judah*. I. *Isaiah* foretels, that they should be delivered into the hands of their enemies because of their pride, their dissoluteness, and their idolatries. II. He reproaches the priests and the prophets for following the general corruption; for being as ignorant and wicked as the people; and for their false confidence, in thinking themselves secure from the judgments of God. III. He denounces those judgments against them, promising, nevertheless, that God would display his infinite power and wisdom in behalf of *Jerusalem*; and that as the plowman, after he has prepared the earth, and sowed his seed, sets apart the good grain, so the Lord would spare the men of *Judah*, and not destroy them with the ungodly.

REFLECTIONS.

THE threatenings of *Isaiah* against the *Israelites* teach us, I. That the sins of men, and particularly pride, drunkenness, and dissoluteness, are the cause of those miseries which befall them, and of the chastisements which God inflicts upon them. II. That if these sins are displeasing to God in all persons, they are still more odious in the ministers of religion; and that ignorance and corruption, in those who ought to teach others, produces depravity in the people, and occasions the ruin and destruction of the church. III. It is to be observed, that *Isaiah* complains of the false confidence of the *Israelites*, who, at the very time the wrath of God was ready to fall upon them, in the profoundest security said, *We have made a covenant with death; and when the overflowing scourge shall*

shall pass through, it shall not come unto us. Thus men flatter themselves in their sins, and think themselves safe, when God is preparing to surprize and overwhelm them with his judgments. IV. God shews his goodness, by promising to lay in *Sion*, for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation. This prophecy properly relates to *Jesus Christ*, and is several times applied to him in the New Testament, where it is said, that *Christ* is that corner-stone upon which the church is built, and which is an occasion of stumbling, and a rock of offence to unbelievers, and a means of salvation to all those that believe in him.

CHAP. XXIX.

THE prophet, in this and the following chapters, speaks of the coming of the *Assyrians*, who were to make war upon *Jerusalem*, and foretels, I. That that city, which he here calls *Ariel*, should in a short time be visited and besieged, but that God would disperse and confound those that made war against them. II. He says, that all these evils would be occasioned by the great hardness of heart, the blindness and security which reigned, even among the prophets, and by the hypocrisy of the *Jews*. III. To these threatenings *Isaiah* joins promises of deliverance.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we are to observe, I. That *Isaiah's* threatenings against *Jerusalem*, and against those who should attack it, were executed a few years after, when *Sennacherib* came to besiege that city, and was forced to retreat with the loss of his army. II. That it was the blindness of the prophets, and the hypocrisy of the *Jews*, which obliged God to use them in this manner. From hence we may conclude, that the ignorance and impiety of the governors of the church is always attended with great corruption: and that God abhors the worship we pay him, when it is only external

external and hypocritical. This is expressed in these words, which our Saviour likewise mentions in the Gospel: *This people draw near to me with their mouths, and honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.* III. We also learn from this chapter, that it is great folly, and extreme impiety, to pretend to hide ourselves from the eyes of the Lord, and to escape his knowledge and his power; and that nothing can screen us from his judgments, nor hinder him from disposing of us as the potter disposes of the clay. Lastly, God gives proof of his love and mercy to his people, in promising, after he had threatened them, to take pity on them, and restore them to a glorious condition.

CHAP. XXX.

I. *ISAIAH* denounces the utmost miseries against those *Jews*, who, instead of quietly waiting for the assistance of the Almighty against the *Assyrians*, had recourse to the *Egyptians*, who would not hearken to the prophet of the Lord, and would even hinder them from speaking. II. He assures them, they should be delivered if they trusted in God rather than in man; that God was ready to shew them favour; that he would deliver them, and let them see the destruction of the *Assyrians*; and that afterwards they should enjoy peace and happiness. This prosperity the prophet expresses, by saying, that then the light of the sun and moon should be much greater than usual, and by other figurative expressions.

REFLECTIONS.

THE completion of what is here read we find in the following chapters, wherein *Isaiah* relates what happened when the *Assyrians* came to make war upon *Jerusalem*. In the mean time, we must make these three reflections on what we read in this chapter. I. The threatenings denounced by *Isaiah* against the *Jews*, who, instead of depending upon God alone,
imagined

imagined they should be defended by the king of *Egypt*, teach us, that God does not bless those, who, in time of danger, have recourse to ill means for their deliverance, and who trust in men rather than in him. To this purpose the prophet says, *In rest shall ye be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be your strength.*

II. *Isaiah's* sharp rebuke of the *Jews*, for refusing to obey the prophets, and for stopping their mouths, and not suffering them to speak, shews us, that it is a token of the greatest obstinacy not to hearken to the voice of God, nor suffer his servants to speak the truth. III. God expresses his great kindness when, regardless of the sins of the *Jews*, he tells them, he waited to be gracious unto them; that he would again have mercy on them, and protect *Jerusalem* and its inhabitants against the *Assyrians*. This kindness and mercy of God towards men should engage us chiefly to seek his favour, to rely on him alone, and to live in such a manner, that we may have him for our protector, and put our whole confidence in him.

CHAP. XXXI.

THE prophet continues to threaten those who should seek for help from the *Egyptians* against the *Assyrians*, and to assure the *Jews* of the divine protection.

REFLECTIONS.

THE principal instruction to be drawn from this chapter is, that to put our confidence in man, rather than in the divine assistance, is to sin against God, and to deceive ourselves. As *Isaiah* said, that the *Egyptians* were men, and not God, we should always remember, that men are very weak, that all their power is but vanity, and that they who depend upon them shall be deceived in their expectation; whereas those who hope in God, and fear him, and rest wholly upon his power, are entirely safe. This the *Jews* should have acknowledged, when *Sinnacherib*, king of *Assyria*, came against *Jerusalem*. His approach and progress

at first threw terror all around ; but God confounded the enterprizes of that prince, and, moved by the prayers of *Hezekiah*, who trusted in God alone, restored peace to *Jerusalem*, as we read in the sequel.

CHAP. XXXII.

I. *ISAIAH* describes the felicity which the *Jews* would enjoy under the reign of king *Hezekiah*, after the defeat and retreat of the king of *Assyria*, and he foretels, that then good men should be exalted, and that unjust and wicked men should be abased, II He applies himself to the women of *Jerusalem*, who lived in luxury and effeminacy, and warns them to bewail the calamities which were to fall upon them ; promising, at the same time, that peace and prosperity should succeed sorrow and trouble, and that the judgments of God should fall heavy like hail upon the *Assyrians*.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter affords us the same reflections as the former, upon the great deliverance that God was to grant to *Jerusalem* in *Hezekiah's* time. Besides, what *Isaiah* says, concerning the happiness and peace which the *Jews* should enjoy under the government of that king, after having been in extreme danger, should make us sensible, that it is a great blessing to a nation to be subject to just and religious princes and magistrates. But it is a much greater happiness to have God for our protector, and to be assured of his assistance and favour in all our wants and necessities.

CHAP. XXXIII.

THIS is again a prophecy of the ruin of the *Assyrians*, who were to come against *Jerusalem*, and greatly alarm the *Jews* in the reign of *Hezekiah*. *Isaiah* promises, that this just and pious king should be blessed ; that *Jerusalem* should be preserved by the power of God, and the army of *Sennacherib*, king of *Assyria*, destroyed.

REFLEC.

REFLECTIONS.

THE first instruction this chapter affords us is, that all the designs, and all the attempts of the enemies of God and his church, are vain and ineffectual; that they cannot resist the power of the Lord, and that whatever they undertake against him, does only turn to his glory and their confusion. It must further be considered, that the threatenings contained in this chapter relate in general to all wicked men, since God is to them a consuming fire. *Sinners are afraid; fearfulness hath surprized the hypocrites; so that they shall say, Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?* These words present us with a lively image of the horror and despair which shall seize the wicked, when God shall come to judge them. Take notice likewise, that what *Isaiah* said of good king *Hezekiah*, agrees to all good men; and, as the prophet expresses it, *He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil, he shall dwell on high, and shall lack nothing.* In these words we see what are the characters of true piety, and the happy condition of its votaries. Lastly, From this chapter we may conclude, that as God formerly delivered *Jerusalem*, when invaded by the *Assyrians*, he will constantly be the protector of the church, and of all that fear him; so that they may boldly say, *The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king, he will save us.*

CHAP. XXXIV.

THIS chapter contains threatenings against the *Edomites*, whose ruin God denounces. *Isaiah* prophesies, that *Idumea* should be desolate; that kings should no longer reign there; and that it should be reduced to a wilderness.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are two reflections to be made upon this chapter. I. That the *Edomites*, who were neighbours to the *Jews*, and who were descended from *Eſau*, brother to the patriarch *Jacob*, were quite destroyed by the king of *Aſſyria*, ſome time after this prediction of *Iſaiah*; that their country was made a wilderneſs, and that they never did recover from that deſolation; ſo that the threatenings which *Iſaiah* and other prophets had pronounced againſt them were put in execution. II. We are to take notice, that God dealt thus with them, becauſe they, at all times, dealt wickedly with the *Jews*, who were their brethren, and becauſe they rejoiced at their fall. Thus the deſtruction of *Idumea* is an example of God's judgment upon thoſe that are cruel and unjuſt, and who wiſh ill to others, and rejoice in their miſeries.

CHAP. XXXV.

THE prophet deſcribes, in figurative expreſſions, the *Jews* joy in their own deliverance, and the confuſion of their enemies.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT is here ſaid relates firſt to the happy ſtate of the *Jews*, when God delivered them from the invaſion of the king of *Aſſyria*, and afterwards, when they were brought again from the captivity of *Babylon*; whiſt the *Edomites*, whoſe ruin *Iſaiah* had foretold in the foregoing chapter, and their other enemies, were destroyed. This paſſage of the prophet is likewiſe to be applied to the Chriſtian church, and to the bleſſings that God would beſtow upon it, by the means of the Meſſiah redeeming and ſanctifying the faithful, destroying their ſpiritual enemies, and conferring on them eternal happineſs. The laſt words of this chapter expreſs the ſentiments of joy and gratitude, which ſo great a deliverance produces in the hearts of all true believers.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXVI.

THE history contained in this and the following chapters proves the completion of the predictions set down in the foregoing chapters, which foretold, that God would deliver *Jerusalem* from the invasion of the *Affyrians*. *Sennacherib*, king of *Affyria*, makes war against *Hezekiah*, king of *Judah*, and after he had taken several cities from him, he sends *Rabshakeh* to *Jerusalem*, to summon *Hezekiah* and the *Jews* to surrender, and to blaspheme against God, saying, that as the Gods of the nations which he had conquered had not been able to deliver their land, so neither would the God whom *Hezekiah* worshipped be able to deliver him. This same history is recorded in the sixteenth and following chapters of the Second Book of *Kings*.

REFLECTIONS.

WE must look upon the war which the king of *Affyria* made against *Hezekiah*, and the advantages which that idolatrous king obtained over him, as a punishment to *Hezekiah*'s subjects, and a trial sent by God to this pious prince, to engage him and all his people to have recourse to him, and to give them afterwards extraordinary proofs of his power in delivering them from so great a danger. It is next to be observed, that the haughty and impious speeches of *Sennacherib*, and his blasphemies against God, which so much astonished *Hezekiah*, hastened the ruin of that idolatrous king, and induced God to destroy him. When men fly in the face of the Almighty, and insult him with impious speeches, he fails not to set bounds to their insolence. This ought to inspire us with an utter abhorrence of every thing that affronts the Divinity; and particularly of blasphemy, and all other discourses that violate the reverence which is due to the great God whom we adore.

CHAP. XXXVII.

I. **HEZEKIAH** acquaints *Isaiah* with the blasphemies of *Sennacherib*, king of *Affyria*; and the prophet assures him of God's assistance. II. *Sennacherib* is obliged to leave *Judea*, because the king of *Ethiopia* had declared war against him; and sends letters to *Hezekiah*, full of threatenings and blasphemies against God. III. *Hezekiah* carries these letters to the temple of the Lord, and implores his assistance. IV. *Isaiah* assures him from God, that the king of *Affyria* should not enter *Jerusalem*, but should return to his own country. V. An angel destroys the army of *Sennacherib*; who, being returned to his own country, is murdered by his own children.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to observe in this chapter, I. That *Hezekiah*, extremely alarmed by the threatenings of *Sennacherib*, had recourse to the intercession of *Isaiah*; carried to the temple the insulting letters which that idolatrous king had sent him; and offered up to God a prayer, full of sincere piety, firm confidence, and great zeal for the glory of God. Thus those who fear God have recourse to him, and the prayers of good men, in all their troubles. II. By the assurances *Isaiah* gave *Hezekiah* of the divine assistance, we learn, that what chiefly provoked the Lord was the extreme insolence of the king of *Affyria*, and his blasphemies; and that God never fails to confound the proud and ungodly. *Isaiah's* message to *Hezekiah* expresses very strongly the pride of *Sennacherib*, and at the same time his weakness, and the power wherewith God would set bounds to his malice, by destroying him, and delivering *Jerusalem*. Lastly, it appears from this chapter, that *Isaiah's* promises, and the confidence of *Hezekiah*, were not in vain. Providence thought fit that *Tyrhakah*, king of *Ethiopia*, should declare war against *Sennacherib*, to oblige him to retire from *Hezekiah's* dominions;

nions; the army of the *Assyrians* was miraculously defeated by an angel, and *Sennacherib* himself, at his return from this expedition, was assassinated by his sons in the temple of the idol whom he worshiped. In these events every one may see, that trust in God and prayers are very effectual; that the power of God is infinite; that he is just, and that sooner or later he punishes wicked princes, and in general all those who affront him by their impiety and their pride.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

KING *Hezekiah* being sick, *Isaiah* comes to acquaint him that he was to die; but God being moved by the prayers of this prince, promises him fifteen years longer life, and confirms the promise by a miracle. *Hezekiah* being recovered, praises God in a song.

REFLECTIONS.

I. IT is to be observed, that about the time *Hezekiah* had been attacked by the *Assyrians*, God visited him with a mortal disease. This was a new trial for that prince whom God loved, and which was to serve to manifest and strengthen his faith and piety. For the same reason God afflicts his children after divers manners, and after he has delivered them from one danger, suffers them sometimes to fall into another. II. The prayer which *Hezekiah* made to God in his sickness, beseeching the Lord to remember, that he had walked before him in integrity, shews, that men apply to God with great confidence in time of adversity, and at the approach of death, when they have lived in holiness, and done that which is right in his sight. III. In the sudden healing of *Hezekiah*, and in the miracle God wrought for his sake, we may observe the power of God, his love to that prince, and the efficacy of the prayers of the righteous. Lastly, Those whom God has delivered from death, or any other danger, ought, in imitation of *Hezekiah*, who

praises God in a song of thanksgiving, to celebrate his loving-kindness, to preserve the remembrance of it, and to employ their life to his glory.

CHAP. XXXIX.

THE king of *Babylon* having sent ambassadors to *Hezekiah*, that prince shewed them his treasures: which *Isaiah* reprov'd him for, and told him, that those treasures, and even his children, should be carried to *Babylon*.

REFLECTIONS.

THESE are the reflections which the scripture makes on what is related in this chapter. When the ambassadors of the king of *Babylon* came to *Hezekiah*, to inquire after the miracle that had happened, when the shadow of the sun-dial of *Ahaz* went backward with the sun. God left *Hezekiah* to himself to try him; but *Hezekiah* rendered not unto God according to the benefit done unto him, for his heart was lifted up; therefore the wrath of God was kindled against *Jerusalem*. Upon which *Isaiah* told him, that his children and his treasures should be carried to *Babylon*; but *Hezekiah* and the inhabitants of *Jerusalem* humbling themselves, the wrath of God came not upon them in the days of *Hezekiah*.—We may learn from hence, how easily men forget themselves in prosperity; and that those who have done their duty in time of affliction, often grow remiss when it is over. This history shews likewise, that worldly advantages are vain and uncertain, and that we should never be puffed up with the possession of them. Lastly, it appears from hence, that God chastises those he loves, when they grow remiss and offend him; but that he is reconciled, as soon as they repent and humble themselves.

CHAP. XL.

I. THE prophet comforts the people of God, and assures them, God, whose word and promises are

are always sure, would deliver them. II. He exhorts them to rejoice at that great deliverance. III. He describes the infinite majesty, power, and wisdom of God, and the folly of those that worship idols. Lastly, He declares the happiness of those who worship the true God, and put their trust in him.

REFLECTIONS.

THE promises which God makes in this chapter, to comfort and redeem his people, are not to be explained only of the deliverance wrought by the *Jews*, in freeing them from the king of *Assyria*, and bringing them again from the *Babylonish* captivity; they chiefly relate to the times of the Gospel, and in particular to the coming of *John* the Baptist, who was sent by God to prepare men to believe in *Jesus Christ*. This we learn in the beginning of *St. John's Gospel*, where this prophecy is applied to *John* the Baptist; *The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight*. To the same times must be referred what *Isaiah* says of the stability of the word of God, in opposition to man's insignificancy, as *St. Peter* teaches, when he, applying to the Gospel the words of *Isaiah*, says, *All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is that word which by the Gospel is preached unto you*, 1 Peter i. 25. What the prophet says in the latter part of this chapter, is very remarkable; he there speaks of the majesty of God in exalted terms, and the most noble ideas; he represents in a lively manner the stupidity of idolators, who worship dumb idols, which their own hands have framed; and describes the perfect happiness of those who put their trust in God alone. These discourses of the prophet teach us, that God abhors idolatry, and neither ought nor can be presented by any image; that we ought to adore and fear this great God, before whom all creatures are as nothing; and that all our happiness depends on his favour, and our trust in him.

CHAP.

CHAP. XLI.

I. **THE** prophet addresses himself to the isles, that is to the distant nations, and exhorts them to own the power of God, and the vanity of idols. II. He assures the *Israelites* of the divine protection; promising to make them triumph over their enemies, and to shower his favours upon them. Lastly, He shews, that the Lord was the only true God; and that the idols were only false divinities, because they could not foretel things to come; and promises that *Jerusalem* should be restored.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter teaches us, I. That the Lord is the true God, who ought alone to be worshipped and adored; that his power is infinite; that he disposes of kings, and of all events; and that those who serve idols are mad. II. We here see the firmness of God's covenant with his ancient people, and his love to them; from whence we may conclude, that as the Christian church is not less dear to him, he will never forsake it; that whatever condition it be in, it has nothing to fear; and that the enemies of the church, far from compassing its ruin, shall be themselves destroyed. III. We ought to take particular notice of the reason which the prophet gives to prove that idols were not gods; saying, that they could not foretel things to come, nor do any hurt or good to men. This consideration, which so strongly demonstrates the vanity of idols, most plainly shews, that the many prophecies we have in the holy scriptures could proceed from none but God. It proves that there is a God, who knows and governs all things, and that the holy scriptures are true and divinely inspired. Lastly, this teaches us, that the great God, who knoweth and can do all things, is the Lord of all men, the judge of the world, and he who ought to be feared: since, as he is almighty, he will exert his power for the good of those
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that worship him, and to punish those that rebel against him.

CHAP. XLII.

I. *ISAIAH* goes on to foretel the *Jews* deliverance and restoration by *Cyrus*; but he chiefly speaks of the coming of the Messiah, to bestow his favours on the *Jews*, and also on the *Gentiles*. II. He exhorts men to praise God, and to rejoice in the happiness which they were shortly to enjoy. III. He foretels, that idolators should be confounded, and idolatry destroyed. IV. He complains of the blindness of the *Jews*; and declares, that because of their sins they should be delivered into the hands of their enemies.

REFLECTIONS.

ST. *Matthew*, quoting the first verses of this chapter, teaches us, that this prophecy represents the characters of the Messiah; which are, his great meekness and humility, the glory of his works, and the power wherewith he was to establish his kingdom throughout all the nations of the earth. These are so many proofs that Jesus is the true Messiah promised by the prophets, and so many inducements to us, to submit ourselves with joy to this Saviour, abounding in power and goodness. II. *Isaiah* expresses the sentiments of joy and gratitude which men would be affected with, when the Saviour of the world should be manifested: which are described in these words, *Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth. Ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles and the inhabitants thereof; let them give glory to the Lord, and declare his praise.* These are the thanks we ought to render incessantly to God, upon account of the good things he has done for us in *Christ Jesus*; and particularly, for delivering us from the idolatry which formerly reigned in the world. III. The example of the *Jews*, who were exposed to desolation because of their blindness and stupidity, is a warning
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to us, that it is sin which exposes men to so many evils, and engages God to forsake them, when they shut their eyes against the light which enlightens them, when they are deaf to his voice, and refuse to walk in his ways, and to keep his law.

CHAP. XLIII.

I. **G**OD promises to deliver his people by his infinite power, and to bring them back from their dispersion. II. He declares that he was the only true God who created all things, and who made himself known to the *Jews*; and that he would not fail to gather them together again. III. He complains, that that people had not served him as they ought, and threatens to chastise them; but promises, however, to be reconciled with them, and to forgive them.

REFLECTIONS.

WE see in the first part of this chapter the love of God to the *Jews*. That love appears in the assurances he gives them of his protection, as being their God, their Saviour, and their King; and in the promises he makes them, of delivering them from the *Babylonish* captivity. These promises are likewise applicable to the Christian Church, and to all the truly faithful, and are very proper to comfort and fill them with hope and joy. The second part of this chapter affords us powerful motives to fear the Lord our God; since he is the Lord, and the only true God, that has been from all times, that has made all things, that knows what is to come, and does what he pleases, so that nothing can resist him, and from his hand nothing can deliver us. God's reproaching of the *Jews*, for having provoked and offended him by their sacrifices, and by the service they paid him, teaches us, that all worship which consists purely of ceremonies, and of the externals of religion, is abominable to the Lord. Lastly, The promises of pardon, at the end of this chapter, shew, that if God afflicts men for their correction,

rection, he is likewise always ready to shew mercy to them, when they humble themselves; that it is he alone who pardons sins; and that he does it only for his own sake, and out of pure mercy.

CHAP. XLIV.

THIS chapter contains, I. Express promises of the deliverance of the *Jews*, and of the favours which God would bestow upon them. II. A beautiful description of the folly of idolators. III. An exhortation to the *Jews*, to rejoice in the hopes that God would bring them out of captivity, and would settle them again in their own country by means of *Cyrus* king of *Persia*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE promises which God made to his people, to redeem them, to cause them to increase and multiply, and to bless them, began to be accomplished when he delivered the *Jews* from the captivity of *Babylon*; but they were perfectly fulfilled when God, according to his promise, sent his Son into the world to save mankind. Wherefore it is our duty to meditate upon these gracious promises with faith and gratitude; to rejoice in God, and return him thanks for the completion of them. II. This chapter contains a description of the vanity of idols, which deserves to be read with care and attention. *Isaiah* represents the folly of those that worship images made of wood or other materials, and fall down before the work of their own hands, and before dead things. By which we see into what extravagancies men are capable of falling, when left to themselves, and deprived of the light of the divine word; and what condition we should still be in, if we had not been delivered from idolatry, to serve the true and living God. This shews likewise with what respect and fear we ought to worship the Almighty God, who is the governor of the world, who knows all things; and as his power knows

knows no bounds, can do good to those that reverence him, and punish those that offend him. The last verses of this chapter are remarkable: God therein promises, not only that the *Jews* should return from *Babylon*, and their city and temple be rebuilt; but he says, this should be done by means of a king named *Cyrus*; which accordingly came to pass about two hundred years after this prediction.

CHAP. XLV.

IN this chapter it is foretold, that there should arise a king named *Cyrus*, to whom God would give great power, and who should set the *Jews* at liberty, and send them back from *Babylon* into their own country. The prophet says, that God would do all this to manifest his power and love to his people; and to shew, that the idols of the heathens were false gods; and that there was no other God besides the God of *Israel*.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter contains one of the most express and most remarkable prophecies in the Old Testament. The purport of it is, that a king named *Cyrus* should become exceeding powerful; that God would go before him, and grant him great victories; that he would give him immense riches, and the monarchy of *Asia*; and that this prince would grant the *Jews* leave to return to their own country, and cause them to rebuild *Jerusalem*, and the temple. These things were foretold two hundred years before they happened; at the end of which time *Cyrus*, the king of *Persia*, destroyed the monarchy of the *Chaldeans*, and published an edict in behalf of the *Jews*, causing them to return to their own country. These predictions, which were so exactly fulfilled, invincibly prove the divine original of the Holy Scriptures, and the truth of religion. They prove, that there is a God who knows things to come, and who presides over all events,
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and every thing that happens in the world. They prove, in particular, that he disposes of things which depend upon the will of man, without depriving him of his liberty; so that men, without knowing it, bring about the designs of Providence. By this the true God is distinguished from idols, as is observed several times in this and the former chapters. From the whole we must conclude, that God alone is to be feared and adored; that he disposes all things with wisdom; and that the end he proposes to himself in all his works, is to make himself known to men, and to engage them to serve and fear him. This appeared still plainer in the accomplishment of the promises made of sending *Jesus Christ*, and establishing his kingdom,

CHAP. XLVI.

ISAIAH foretels, that the *Babylonians* should be destroyed; and that it should then appear, that *Bell* and *Nebo*, which were their idols, were nothing but false gods; and that the Lord was the protector of the *Jews*, and the only true God. The prophet adds, that God would bring from the east a man, who should execute the designs of his providence; by which he denotes *Cyrus*, who would come from *Persia*, to subdue the *Babylonians*, and set the *Jews* at liberty.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT is here said of the destruction of *Babylon*, was fulfilled when that city was taken, and the empire of the *Babylonians* passed to the *Medes* and *Persians*. God himself declares, that this great event would be an illustrious proof to the *Jews*, and to all nations, that the gods of the heathens were but dead idols; that he alone was the Almighty; that futurity was perfectly known to him; and that nothing could hinder the execution of his designs. We discover, likewise, in the destruction of *Babylon*, God's love to his people,

and

and the truth of his promises. God here assures the *Jews*, that as he had taken care of them from the beginning, he would always be the same to them; from whence we may conclude, that God will never cease to love and protect his church, and that it is not possible he should forget his own people. This chapter contains likewise a remarkable description of the madness of idolators, who, after they had made images of gold or silver, fell down before them, and implored the assistance of the gods, who could neither stir from their place, nor hear them, nor deliver them. From whence we learn, that idolatry is the greatest insult that can be offered to the Deity, and at the same time the greatest error that men can possibly fall into.

CHAP. XLVII.

ISAIAH continues to prophesy against *Babylon*.

He foretels, that God would humble the pride of the *Babylonians*; and that after he had delivered his people into their hands to be chastised by them, he would strip them of their power and glory which they were so proud of; and would punish them for the barbarities they had exercised against his people, for their pride, their idolatry, and other crimes.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to consider on this chapter, I. That God disposes of all things, and particularly of the most powerful kings and states, with an irresistible power, and at the same time with perfect justice. This appeared formerly in the abasement and destruction of *Babylon*, which came to pass according to the predictions of *Isaiah*. II. It appears, that these things engaged God to punish the *Babylonians*, their pride, their inhuman treatment to the *Jews*, and their idolatry. Therefore we cannot doubt but these sins expose men, in a particular manner, to the wrath of God. This proves too, that God is the judge of the world;

world; that he alone is to be feared; and that he is engaged by his goodness and justice to do good to those that serve him, and study to please him.

CHAP. XLVIII.

I. *ISAIAH* tells the *Jews*, that God had forewarned them of what was coming upon them that they might renounce idolatry, confess that he was the only God, and be converted and turn unto him. II. He tells them, that God, for his own sake, and for the glory of his name, would not entirely destroy them; but would execute his judgments and threatenings on the *Babylonians*, their enemies. III. That if they had hearkened to the voice of God, they would not have been delivered up to the *Babylonians*; that nevertheless God would redeem them, and bring them again from *Babylon*; but that there should be no peace for their enemies, nor for the wicked in general.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter shews, I. That God manifests himself to men, and makes known his will to them, and his purposes, as far as it is necessary, to teach them to fear him, and to render them happy. II. It is to be well observed, that God says here, he had declared things to come, long before they happened, to convince the *Jews* that he was the only true God, and to turn them from the worship of idols. This consideration, which God proposes in so many places of this Book, and in the other prophets, deserves our most serious reflections. God could not more expressly declare, that one of the clearest ways in which he has revealed himself to mankind, are the predictions of the prophets; which, with the strongest evidence, prove that there is a God and a Providence, which governs all things: Therefore we ought to give particular heed to this proof, that we may, by this means, be confirmed in the belief of the truth of religion, and the practice of our duty. III. The third instruction

instruction is, that if men on their part would act suitably to what God does for them, they would enjoy perfect happiness, and would not compel him, as it were, to punish them. God shews his favourable dispositions to men in these expressions; *I am the Lord thy God, which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way thou shouldst go. O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments, then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.* Lastly, It appears from this chapter, that, if God is engaged to punish men, he withdraws his scourge from them as soon as he observes them humbled. Thus he acted towards the *Jews*, when he sent them into captivity, and afterwards brought them again in peace.

CHAP. XLIX.

I. *ISAIAH* proclaims the glorious restoration of the *Jews*, and at the same time the coming of the Messiah, who should bring salvation and deliverance to all nations; and promises the *Jews*, that God would set them at liberty by freeing them from the *Babylonish* captivity. II. He invites all creatures to rejoice at the prospect of so great salvation; he comforts the *Jews*, who might have thought themselves forsaken of God; he assures them, that the Lord would protect and restore them, multiply them exceedingly, procure them the favour of strange princes, and would make their glory visible to all people, by subduing their oppressors.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT is said in this chapter was in part fulfilled, when, about two hundred years after these predictions, the *Jews* were recalled from the *Babylonish* captivity. God then displayed, in a glorious manner, his power, in the sight of all nations: he gave his people strange princes for their protectors, such as *Cyrus*, *Darius*, and several others; he gathered them together in their
own

own country, and caused them there to increase and multiply, and blessed them exceedingly. But these promises more especially relate to the Christian church. Here we see clearly the calling of the Gentiles, and the marvellous increase of the church of *Christ*. This *St. Paul* teaches us, when to convince the *Jews* that the Gospel was to be preached to the heathens, he cites the prophecy taken from this chapter: *I have set thee to be a light to the Gentiles, that thou shouldst be for salvation unto the ends of the earth*, Acts xiii. 47. and when the same apostle applies likewise to the times of the Gospel these other words of *Isaiah*, *In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee; behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of Salvation*, 2 Cor. vi. 2. In that happy time the church saw her sons multiply; and the kings and great men of the world submitted to the Almighty God, and came into the number of his worshippers. All who have the happiness to be members of the church, should be sensible of the value of these privileges, and possess them with gratitude and thankfulness. Christian princes, in particular, ought to learn from hence, that their greatest glory consists in knowing God, in belonging to his church, in being the defenders and nursing fathers of it, and in using their power to make it flourish more and more. Lastly, We have here the strongest assurances of God's care and love for his people; God declares, that though a woman may forget her sucking child, he will never forget his church, which he has graven upon the palms of his hands. These are promises full of comfort to the church in general, and to all its true members.

CHAP. L.

I. *ISAIAH* made use of the comparison of a woman who had been divorced from her husband, to shew the *Jews*, that if they had been rejected, it was because they had forsaken God; that, however, God was able to deliver them, since he was governor

of the world, and nothing could resist his power. II. He mentions the troubles which he had been exposed to in the discharge of his ministry, and expresses his firm confidence in God.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT *Isaiah* says to the *Jews* in this chapter, should lead us to observe, I. That God never forsakes men, till they have first forsaken him, and that their sins interrupt the flow of his mercies towards them. II. That if the *Jews* were justly rejected for not hearkening to the voice of God and his prophets, our condemnation will be much more severe, if we hearken not to the voice of *Jesus Christ*. III. The ministers of the Lord may learn from what happened to *Isaiah*, that they may expect to meet with much opposition in the discharge of their office; but that, however, they are not to leave their calling; for God will support them, and all who labour and suffer for his sake. Lastly, We see, in the second part of this chapter, a representation of the contradictions *Jesus Christ* was exposed to, of the insults he received from his crucifiers, and the glorious and happy issue of all his labours, when God raised him from the dead, and established his kingdom, in spite of all opposition from the world.

CHAP. LI.

I. THE prophet promises the *Jews*, that as God had blessed *Abraham* and *Sarah*, by giving them a numerous posterity, he would also comfort and increase them after their captivity; would give them reason to rejoice, and for their deliverance would exert the same power which he had formerly shewn against *Rahab*, that is, against *Egypt*, when he delivered their fathers, and made a way for them in the *Red Sea*. II. He exhorts them to trust in God, who would not fail to comfort *Jerusalem*, raising it from its ruins, after it had been destroyed by the *Chaldeans*, and then to destroy

stroy the *Chaldeans* themselves, for all the mischiefs they had brought upon the *Jews*.

REFLECTIONS.

IT must be observed, I. That, according to the promises contained in this chapter, God did restore the *Jews*, after he had afflicted them, and displayed his almighty power in their behalf, when he redeemed them from the captivity of *Babylon*. II. What is here said, tends very much to the consolation of the church in general. God's tender affection to the *Jewish* nation suffers us not to doubt, but he loves also the church of his own Son; and that if he afflicts it, he is nevertheless always its protector. III. The prophet teaches us not to fear men, though they appear never so formidable, since they are but mortals, and the Lord is infinitely more powerful than they. IV. What is here said of the joy with which the *Jews* should be filled, when the Lord brought them out of *Babylon*, is to be looked upon as a type of that great joy which *Jesus Christ* would produce in the world. But it must likewise be observed, that this joy only belongs to the righteous, and that the consolations we read of in this chapter, are only intended for the true people of God, for those that seek the Lord, and that hear his voice, and have his law engraven in their hearts; but these promises do by no means relate to the ungodly, whom God has threatened to give to drink of the cup of his fury, and to overtake them with his judgments.

CHAP. LII.

THE prophet continues to promise, that God would restore *Jerusalem*. He assures them that God would work wonders for their deliverance in the sight of all the earth, and bring them from *Babylon* with great joy.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS prophecy has two views; The first was, the deliverance of the captive *Jews* from *Babylon*; and in this respect these predictions were fulfilled when *Cyrus* put an end to their captivity, and they left the idolatrous nations to return to *Jerusalem*, there to worship God as before. The second and chief design of this prophecy was to foretel the redemption of mankind by *Jesus Christ*, and that the happy news of this redemption, and of the coming of the kingdom of God, should be published throughout the world by the apostles. This *St. Paul* teaches us, when he applies to the preaching of the Gospel these words of *Isaiah*: *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Sion, Thy God reigneth!* It is evident, from this chapter, I. That it is the duty of those, to whom the Gospel is preached, to bless God for having accomplished these noble promises; and to receive with joy and thankfulness the glad tidings of salvation which have been declared to them by the apostles and ministers of *Jesus Christ*. II. That it is the duty of all such to separate themselves from the world, and from all its pollutions, and to sanctify themselves, that they may serve God with a pure heart, living in innocence, and in a manner answerable to those inestimable blessings which God has conferred on them by his Son *Jesus Christ*.

CHAP. LIII.

THIS prophecy describes the humiliation and death of the Messiah; as also the glory to which God would exalt him after his resurrection.

REFLECTIONS.

NOTHING can more clearly or more expressly represent the state of humiliation through which the Messiah

Messiah was to pass, nor his state of exaltation and glory, than this admirable prophecy. The spirit of God here foretels, that the Messiah should appear in a mean condition; that, for this reason, he should be despised and rejected by the *Jews*; that he should take our sins upon him; that he should, by his death, atone for them; that he should be numbered with the transgressors; and that he should be honourably interred after his death. We see likewise described in this prophecy the perfect innocence of our Lord, and his patience under all the injuries and affronts he received. Lastly, The prophet foretels, that after the Messiah was made an offering for sin, he should see his seed, he should prolong his days. The meaning of which is, that his death should be followed by his resurrection, and exaltation to glory; that he should gather together his church; that he would justify those that should believe in him, and would establish his kingdom in the world. This prophecy, which presents us with a view of the principal circumstances of the passion of *Jesus Christ*, should fully convince us, that he is the great Redeemer spoken of by the prophets; that his doctrine is true and divine; that his sufferings and death are the wonderful means by which God has been pleased to save men; and that being now exalted in glory, he is able to save all those who come unto God by him, and obey him.

CHAP. LIV.

I. *ISAIAH*, under the similitude of a barren woman, to whom God would give children, and of a wife forsaken by her husband, and afterwards restored to favour, represents God's love to the *Jews*, which would engage him to increase and bless them after their return from the captivity. II. He assures them, that God would no more be in wrath with his people; and, as he promised *Noah*, after the flood, never more to drown the earth, so he would never more deliver them into the hands of their enemies;

that he would restore *Jerusalem* to a glorious state, and would disappoint and bring to nought all the contrivances and attempts formed against it.

REFLECTIONS.

WE see, in this chapter, how the prophet comforted the *Jews*, by promising them that God, after he had chastised them, and reduced them to a small number, would bring them again from *Babylon*, would greatly increase them, and place them in a glorious state, giving them proofs of his love, and defeating all the designs and contrivances formed against them by their enemies. These promises do not terminate in the re-establishment of the *Jews*; their principal aim is to represent what God intended to do for his church, and what was to happen in the days of the Messiah, when the church should be spread abroad throughout all the world, and be enlarged by the conversion of the Gentiles; when God would make an everlasting covenant with it; and, though it was afflicted and persecuted, God would defend it against all the enterprises of its enemies; so that, as our Lord says, the gates of hell should not prevail against it. The truth of these predictions has appeared in the wonderful establishment of the Christian Church, and in its preservation in the midst of so many dangers and persecutions to which it has been exposed; but the church's glory will appear in more splendor, when it shall be spread over all the earth, and the kingdom of God be fully manifested. These reflections should make us sensible of our own happiness, in being members of the church; and should engage us continually to pray to God for the entire accomplishment of these glorious promises.

CHAP. LV.

I. THE prophet, after he had foretold the happy restoration of the people of God, invites men to receive the mercies he offered them, and to be converted.

converted. II. He speaks, of the efficacy of the word of God, and of the firmness of his promises made to the *Jews*.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter teaches us, I. That God is so kind as to invite men to partake of his favours, and even solicits them strongly to receive them. Here let us consider, that these invitations are particularly directed to us in the Gospel, where God offers us the most valuable blessings in his Son. II. We here see, that when God calls us, it is our duty to receive with readiness and thankfulness the offers he is graciously pleased to make us; and that instead of labouring after that which satisfieth not, we should apply all our care to the attainment of true riches. III. The way to obtain these is, to hearken to the voice of *Jesus Christ*, whom God has given for our ruler and guide; to seek the Lord whilst he is to be found, to call upon him whilst he is near us, to turn away from iniquity, and be converted to God. Lastly, The prophet assures us, that by this means we shall obtain from God the pardon of our sins, and the effects of his mercy; and shall experience the truth of the promises which he has made us in his word.

CHAP. LVI.

I. **T**HE prophet exhorts the *Jews* to the practice of virtue, and particularly to the keeping of the sabbath. II. He foretels, that strangers, and those who were not admitted to all the privileges of the *Israelites*, by the law of *Moses*, should be admitted into the house of God, and offer him their sacrifices and their prayers; the meaning of which was, that God would receive all people and nations indifferently into his covenant. III. He threatens the *Jews* with destruction, and laments the extreme corruption of their rulers.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter affords us these three instructions. I. That what God requires of us, above all things, is to do that which is right, to keep his law, and not to profane his covenant and service. *Isaiah* teaches us, that this is what God chiefly regards, and that all those who discharge these duties are accounted his people, whatever their condition be in other respects. This point St. *Peter* has perfectly cleared up, when he says, *I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.* II. The next reflection relates to the happiness enjoyed by many nations, who have now the privilege to be admitted into covenant with God, which formerly they were excluded from, and the lively sense of gratitude which we ought to entertain for so great a favour conferred on us. Lastly, Let us consider the complaints which *Isaiah* makes against the rulers of the *Jews*, whom he calls *blind and sleepy watchmen*, and *dumb greedy dogs*: to signify their unfaithfulness in conducting the people, their neglect of duty, and thinking of nothing but their own interest, and the gratifying their inclinations. This should serve for a warning to those whom God has set over his church, as well as to magistrates. When such persons want understanding, or zeal, when they are effeminate, careless, or addicted to their interests or pleasures, they not only expose themselves to the wrath of God, but also bring ruin and desolation upon the church.

CHAP. LVII.

I. *ISAIAH* reproaches the *Jews* with their stupidity and hardness of heart, which appeared in their not observing, that the death of good men was a preface of their destruction. II. He reproves them
for

for continuing to commit their idolatries under trees, and in the high places, notwithstanding the warnings they had received, and threatenings which God had denounced against them; and for seeking help from man, instead of trusting in God only. III. He promises, however, that the *Jews* should return from the captivity; he comforts the humble persons that were among the *Jews*, preaching peace to such; but he declares, that there is no peace for the wicked.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may make these four reflections upon this chapter: I. That God often takes good men out of this world, that they may not be involved in the miseries that are to fall upon the wicked; that when the righteous die, they go into a state of peace and rest; and that their death is sometimes followed with many calamities. This they had an instance of in good king *Josiah*, whom God took to himself before the destruction of the *Jews*. II. That if God complained so often of the obstinacy of the *Jews*, who continued to provoke him by giving themselves up to idolatry; he will be much more offended with us, if we do not serve him faithfully, but forsake him, though we have so many reasons to engage us to fear him, and continue faithful to him. III. We learn, that God dwells in humble and contrite hearts; and therefore if any one desires to have communion with God, he must renounce himself, and be lowly in his own sight. The last reflection relates to the sad condition of the wicked; God declares that there is no peace for them, and that they are in continual trouble and uneasiness. This is the usual state of a guilty conscience, which the wicked experience sooner or later; this ought likewise to inspire us with a great aversion to wickedness and impiety.

CHAP. LVIII.

GOD commands *Isaiah* to reprove the *Jews* severely for their sins, and especially for the hypocrisy of their fastings: he shews what sort of fasts are acceptable to God; and says, the Lord hears, delivers, and blesses those that call upon him with sincerity and humility, and truly turn to him.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter teaches us, what fasts God accepts, and what he rejects. God here declares very expressly, that he is offended with the services, and with the fastings of the wicked; that he has no regard to the humiliation of sinners, when it is only external and hypocritical or lasts but a short time; but that the true way of fasting and praying, is to humble ourselves before God, to afflict our souls, to reform our lives, to do justice, to repair the evil we have committed, to exercise charity, and to serve God with fidelity, love, and reverence. The prophet assures us, that God never fails to hear and deliver such as pray and fast after this manner, and to shower his blessings upon them. Lastly, He teaches us, that the way to make God propitious, and to enjoy peace and quiet at all times, is to renounce our own wills, to resign them absolutely to the will of God, to seek all our joy in him alone, to reverence religion, and to place our greatest happiness in serving God, and honouring his holy name. Let us seriously reflect upon these things at all times, but especially when we present ourselves before God, to perform any of the duties of piety and religion.

CHAP. LIX.

I. THE prophet tells the *Jews*, that if God did not avert the calamities that were to fall upon them, it was not for want of power, but because of their sins
 4 and

and corruption, the greatness of which he here describes. II. He represents the miseries and calamities with which God would shortly punish them. III. To these threatenings he adds such promises as give them reason to hope that God would have compassion on them, and send a deliverer to them that should be converted.

REFLECTIONS.

TO make a good use of this chapter the following things are to be observed: I. That if God punishes men, and leaves them exposed to sufferings, it is not for want of power or goodness to do good to them, and to deliver them, but their sins make the separation between God and them. II. That by a sincere return to God, men may render him propitious, and infallibly recover his favour. III. Great notice is to be taken of the description here given of the corruption of the *Jews*, of the disorder of their actions and words, of the injustice and violence committed among them; and particularly of the prophet's complaint, that good men are very few in number; that no body durst undertake to defend a righteous cause, nor oppose the wicked; and that if any one desired to keep himself from evil, he was immediately persecuted by the wicked. When a nation is arrived to such a pitch of corruption, we may imagine the evil is at its height, and that punishment will quickly follow; this appears from the threatenings contained in this chapter, and from that which happened to the *Jews*. As to the promises which the Lord here makes of sending a Redeemer, and of pouring his spirit upon his people, it must be considered, that they principally relate to *Jesus Christ*, who was to be sent by God for the salvation of the *Jews*, and of all men; but they were made only on behalf of such as should be converted from their sins; and by no means for the hardened and impenitent.

CHAP. LX.

ISAIAH describes the glorious and happy state of the church after its restoration: he prophesies, that kings and strange nations, who had afflicted the *Jews*, should honour and protect them; that they should come together from all parts to worship the true God, and to be joined to his people, and to enter into covenant with him; and that the church, thus blessed by God, should then enjoy perfect happiness.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS prophecy should be considered in three views. I. As it relates to the happy restoration of the *Jews*, after the captivity of *Babylon*. That nation was then seen assembling together from all parts to rebuild *Jerusalem*, and to increase and multiply in it; then it was that strange kings, as *Cyrus*, *Darius*, and *Artaxerxes*, protected the *Jews*, honoured their religion, contributed towards restoring the Divine service, and even came some of them to pay their homage to the God of *Israel*. II. These prophecies are yet more applicable to the Christian church, which has been gathered out of all people, and in which so many kings and nations of the earth have placed all their glory, by embracing the service of the true God. These remarkable events, which we are witnesses of, prove to all the world, that God formerly spake by the prophet *Isaiah*, and that we have great reason to acknowledge and admire the power of God, and the faithfulness of his promises. Lastly, This prophecy, being taken in its most perfect sense, represents the most glorious state of the church, when the kingdom of God, shall be fully manifested, and shall be received into his glory. This *St. John* teaches us, when he applies to the heavenly *Jerusalem* the words we have now read: *And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it.* Rev. xxi. 23. And ch. xxii. 5. *And the nations of them which are saved,*

saved, shall walk in the light of it; for the Lord giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.

CHAP. LXI.

IN this chapter *Isaiah*, under the type of the deliverance and restoration of the *Jews*, speaks of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, wherewith the Messiah was to be invested; of the design of his coming, and of his ministry; which was to be the redemption and sanctification of his church; and of the joy which the church would then receive.

REFLECTIONS.

IT appears from this chapter, that God was to send a great prophet, who was to be filled with the spirit of God, to bring glad tidings of salvation to men, and deliver them from the slavery of sin; and that by him God would make an everlasting covenant with them. This prophecy relates to *Jesus Christ*, who is that great prophet who was anointed with the spirit of the Lord, to preach the Gospel to men, to proclaim *liberty to the captives*, and to publish the *acceptable year of the Lord*. This appears from the fourth chapter of *St. Luke*, where we are told, that when the Lord read in the synagogue of *Nazareth*, this place of the prophet *Isaiah*, he said, that this prophecy was fulfilled in him. But this same prophecy teaches us, that these valuable blessings are only reserved for the meek and humble; for those that are broken-hearted, and earnestly desire the grace of God. This must be the estate of those, who expect to share in the blessings which *Jesus Christ* has purchased for us, and in that joy which the church shall experience when its Redeemer cometh.

CHAP. LXII.

THE prophet continues to foretel that God would redeem his church, which, though it seemed forsaken of God, should again be in a glorious state, and

no more delivered into the hands of its enemies. He prophesies of the coming of the Redeemer, and exhorts men to prepare for his reception.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we learn, I. That God's love to his church will not suffer him to forsake it; that he loveth it as the bridegroom loves his bride, and that it will ever be the object of his care and protection. II. That it is the duty of all those who are concerned for the glory of God, to pray continually for the prosperity of the church. III. God here promises to send his people a Saviour to redeem them, and place them in a glorious state on earth. The truth of these promises appeared first in the return of the *Jews* from the captivity of *Babylon*, when *Jerusalem* was rebuilt, and afterwards in the coming of *Jesus Christ* the Saviour of the world, and in the establishment of his church. Lastly, At the hearing of these comfortable promises we are bound to bless God, who has fulfilled them in our behalf, and to endeavour to make suitable returns for the happiness we enjoy of being members of his church, which is his spouse, of being his people, whom he hath redeemed, and for whom he hath prepared a place of glory and happiness in his kingdom.

CHAP. LXIII.

I. THE prophet describes, in figurative terms, the judgments God would exercise upon the enemies of the *Jews*, and in particular, upon the *Edomites*, and upon *Bozrah*, one of their cities. II. He represents what God had done for his people, when he delivered them out of *Egypt* by *Moses*, and at other times; and he complains of their rebellion and ingratitude. III. He adds a prayer, imploring God's mercy on the *Jews*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE destruction of the *Edomites*, which happened some time after *Isaiah* had foretold their ruin, is a proof of the truth and divinity of this prediction, as well as of the justice of God on those idolatrous nations, who had done great injuries to the kingdom of *Judah*. II. We must consider, that if the prophet gave thanks to God on this occasion, for the care he had always taken of his people *Israel*, we have still more reason to bless him for the victory which *Jesus Christ* has gained over our spiritual enemies, by the shedding his blood for us, and by his glorious resurrection. In this view, we may say with *Isaiah*: *I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord has bestowed on us, and the great goodness towards the house of Israel, which he had bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses.* III. When we hear how *Isaiah* reproached the *Jews* for their ingratitude towards God, and for rebelling against him, after so many wonders he had done for them and for their fathers; we should call to mind what God hath done for us, and should give better proof of our gratitude than the *Jews* did. IV. There are two things to be remarked in the prayer at the end of this chapter. One is, that as *Isaiah* beseeched God to have compassion on *Jerusalem* for the glory of his name, notwithstanding the unworthiness of the *Jews*; so the mercy of God, and the stability of his covenant and promises, should be the foundation of all our confidence. The other remark is, that these words, *O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear?* do not imply, that God was the cause and author of the wickedness of the *Jews*; they mean only that God seeing their obstinacy and wilful hardness of heart, had suffered them to go astray, and in just judgment upon them had left them to themselves.

CHAP. LXIV.

A PRAYER, wherein the prophet beseeches God to manifest his glory and majesty in the sight of all men; and, for the deliverance of his people, to work miracles in their behalf, like those he had formerly wrought for them. He then intreats him not to remember their sins, and to pity the deplorable state *Jerusalem* and the temple were going to be reduced to by the *Babylonians*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE description in this chapter of God's sovereign power, and the proofs he formerly gave of it, should induce us to reverence and fear that Almighty Being, whose power none can resist, who has, in all ages, done so great things for the deliverance of those that trust in him, and has always made the wicked feel the effects of his justice. II. As *Isaiah* formerly prayed for the deliverance of the *Jews*, all those who love God and his church, should, without ceasing, offer up devout prayers in its behalf, and beseech him, above all, to display his power and strength in its sanctification, to extend it throughout all the earth, and to manifest himself to those that know him not. And as the prophet, interceding for the *Jews*, acknowledged they were guilty and defiled, and yet besought God to pity their sad condition, and to remember they were his people, and the work of his hands; so we ought to offer up our prayers to God, with profound humility, and a sincere acknowledgement of our own sins and unworthiness, and to place all our hopes in his mercy only, in the promises he has given, and the covenant he has made with us in *Jesus Christ* our Lord.

CHAP. LXV.

I. THE Lord declares, that he would call the Gentiles to the knowledge of himself, and cast off the *Jews*, because of their rebellion, and particularly

for the idolatry with which they were defiled. II. Nevertheless, he foretels that *Jerusalem* should be rebuilt, that the *Jews* should dwell in their own land, that the cattle should feed upon *Sharon* and *Achor*, which were fruitful pastures; and that God should heap his blessings upon them, whilst the rebellious and idolatrous *Jews* were abandoned to his vengeance. Lastly, God promises to create new heavens and a new earth, and to cause righteousness and peace to reign among them.

REFLECTIONS.

I. GOD here promises to make himself known to those who sought him not, and to a people that did not call upon his name. This prophecy expressly denotes, that God would make himself known to the heathen; as St. *Paul* shews, when he cites these words in the Epistle to the *Romans*. II. God threatens to reject the *Jews*, because they had provoked him by their idolatry, and continual disobedience. This threatening was put in execution, when *Jerusalem* fell under the power of the *Babylonians*, and the *Jews* were carried into captivity. So severe a punishment should make rebellious and ungrateful Christians dread the most severe effects of the Divine vengeance. III. This chapter instructs us, that God in the execution of his judgments, always makes a difference between the wicked and his faithful servants; and that the wicked have nothing but shame and grief for their portion. IV. It is here foretold, that *God would create new heavens, and a new earth; and that the wolf and the lamb should feed together*; which signifies not only that God was going to alter the state of *Jerusalem* and of the *Jews*, by delivering them from captivity, and restoring peace; but that God would soon renew the world, and re-unite all men in his church. This renovation of all things began with the preaching of the Gospel, and will be still more fully compleated in the latter days. Upon this the apostle teaches us, that since *all things are become new, and we look for*
new

new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, we ought to be new creatures, and study to be without spot, and blameless. Lastly, From hence it appears, that Christ's design was to re-unite all men in his church, and to make them live in unity and concord; and therefore that his kingdom is a kingdom of peace, that Christians ought not to hurt one another, and that their character should be mutual love, peace, forbearance, and charity.

CHAP. IXVI.

I. GOD declares in an extremely affecting manner, that he rejected the sacrifices and external worship of the *Jews*; and that he would soon severely punish their hypocrisy and disobedience. **II.** He promises to restore peace to *Jerusalem*, to give it many children, to heap his blessings upon it, and, above all, to sanctify it; and threatens the wicked with eternal ruin.

REFLECTIONS.

THE first part of this chapter teaches us, **I.** That God, being the creator of the world, dwells not in temples made with hands; that he is not honoured by a worship that is merely external; that he accepts none but those that can come to him with an humble spirit, and who tremble at his word; and that without these dispositions, all acts of divine worship, even those he has established and commanded, such as were under the law, sacrifices of sheep and oxen, oblations and incense, are so far from pleasing him, that they become an abomination to him. **II.** The promises which God made to redeem his people, to multiply them, and to pour down his blessings upon them, were all accomplished, when the *Jews* were gathered from the several countries of the world to *Jerusalem*, and the divine worship restored. But these promises especially declare, that the Gentiles should enter into the church of Christ, which also came to pass. Herein we should

should acknowledge the truth and faithfulness of God, as well as his mercy towards us. However, we must likewise carefully remember, that God declares several times in this chapter, that these promises, and these blessings, are only for the faithful and elect; and that he would display his vengeance upon the wicked and unbelieving. From whence it appears, that it is only by faith and obedience, that we can be made partakers of that salvation and glory, which *Isaiah* and the other prophets have promised, and which have been purchased for us by *Jesus Christ*, to whom be praise and adoration for ever and ever. *Amen.*

The end of the Book of the Prophet ISAIAH.

THE
BOOK
OF THE PROPHET
J E R E M I A H.

ARGUMENT.

Jeremiah, who was a priest and prophet, prophesied from the 13th year of king Josiah, till after the taking of Jerusalem, which was about the space of 45 years. This book is writ with a great deal of plainness and at the same time with great strength and energy. It is partly historical and partly prophetical. We meet with several prophecies in it concerning the ruin of the Jews, their return from the captivity, the destruction of the Babylonians, and of some other kingdoms; the calling of the Gentiles, and the new covenant that God would make with mankind by Jesus Christ. We have here likewise a relation of the sufferings Jeremiah himself underwent, and of several things that happened to him before, and after the taking of Jerusalem; as also an account of what passed during the siege and taking of that city, and of the state of the Jews that dwelt in Judea, and who retired into Egypt, after that Jerusalem was taken by the Chaldeans.

CHAP. I.

THIS chapter consists of three parts. I. *Jeremiah* gives an account in what manner he was called to the office of a prophet, the reasons he gave to be excused from it, and God's command to obey his call. II. *Jeremiah* relates two visions which he saw; the first of which was, the vision of an almond-tree beginning to bud, which signified that the destruction of *Jerusalem* was near; and the second, which was a seething pot towards the north, shewed, that this desolation would come from the north, that is, from *Babylon*. III. We here see the promises God gave *Jeremiah* of his assistance and protection.

REFLECTIONS after reading the chapter.

I. LET us make one general reflection on this Book, which is, that God, in his great goodness, sent *Jeremiah* to the *Jews* to exhort them to repentance, and to warn them of their approaching destruction. II. It must be remarked, that *Jeremiah* was called to be a prophet when he was yet young; that at first he was afraid to take this office upon him, and would have excused himself from it, but that, when God commanded him, he obeyed the call. From whence it appears, that *Jeremiah* did not take this office upon himself of his own choice, but in obedience to the will of God, and with profound humility. As it is God alone who is to send his ministers, so those whom he calls ought to be sensible of their weakness; but they ought nevertheless, to obey his voice, and to rely upon his assistance. The two visions of *Jeremiah* gave him to understand, that the chief design of his ministry was, to denounce the approaching ruin of *Jerusalem*. Thus the servants of God are sent, not only to deliver promises to men, but very often threatnings, to warn them of the judgments of God. Lastly, the command of God to the prophet to acquaint the *Jews* with all that he should command him, promising to support him

against all that should oppose him, shews, that the ministers of the Lord are bound to discharge their office without fearing men, and courageously to declare the whole will of God; and that God always supports them that faithfully discharge the duties of their calling.

CHAP. II.

THERE are three things to be considered in this chapter: I. God, under the similitude of a husband, who has a tender affection for his wife, represents his own love to the *Jews*, and the many good things he had done for them in the land of *Canaan*. II. He complains of the ungrateful returns which the *Jews* had made to so much love, and for so many favours; that the people, and even the priests, the kings, and the rulers, had carried their rebellions so far, as to forsake the Lord to serve false gods, which the prophet reproaches them for very largely. III. God tells them, that this their ingratitude and idolatry, would be the cause of their destruction, and that he would punish them, by delivering them into the hands of their enemies; that neither *Noph*, nor *Tahapanes*, that is, the *Egyptians*, nor the *Assyrians*, in whom they trusted, should deliver them; and that God would make use of these very nations to chastise them.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter engages us to reflect upon the love of God towards the *Jews*, upon their ingratitude, and their destruction. I. Upon the first of these we should reflect, that if God thus loved the *Jews*, and did such great things for them, he has manifested to us still greater love, and bestowed much more valuable blessings upon us, than those which he vouchsafed to his ancient people. II. God reproaches the *Jews* with falling into the basest ingratitude against him, and forsaking his worship, to commit the most abominable idolatries. This is expressed in the following complaint which God makes: *What iniquity have your fathers*

fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain? Neither have they said, Where is the Lord that hath brought us up out of the land of Egypt? Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, for my people have forsaken me, who am the fountain of living waters, to hew them out broken cisterns that can hold no water. By this God very plainly shews, that he is man's sovereign good; that he ceaseth not to draw men to him by his kindness; that it is extreme ingratitude and folly thus to turn away from God, who is the fountain of all their happiness, and cleave to vain things which cannot make them happy; that those who behave thus have no excuse to plead, and are of necessity miserable, as the *Jews* experienced. III. We see that the *Jews*, for their unfaithfulness to God, were deprived of his protection, and drew upon themselves all those miseries which *Jeremiah* threatened them with. Thus all those who forsake God, who abuse his long suffering, and are insensible both of his mercies and judgments, perish at last in a miserable manner.

CHAP. III.

I. *JEREMIAH* here represents, under the similitude of a woman that had committed adultery, the crime of the *Jews* in forsaking the service of God, and breaking his covenant; and continuing the same comparison, he speaks of *Israel* and *Judah*, as of two sisters that had both fallen into the sin of adultery; The meaning of which is, that the *Israelites* of the ten tribes had first forsaken God to serve idols; and that those of the kingdom of *Judah* had imitated, and even exceeded them by their sins and obstinacy. II. God declares, that notwithstanding the unfaithfulness of that people, he was nevertheless still ready to forgive them upon their conversion. III. He promises, that after he had dispersed the people of *Israel* and *Judah*, he would one day gather them together, and that then they should serve him faithfully,

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE comparison that *Jeremiah* makes of the idolatrous *Jews* with an idolatrous woman, represents the sin and perfidiousness of Christians, who do not observe towards God the fidelity they owe him, who break the covenant they have made with him, and return his loving kindness with nothing but ingratitude and rebellion. II. We here see that the *Jews* of *Jerusalem*, and of the kingdom of *Judah*, who ought to have been more firmly attached to the pure worship of God, since they had his service settled among them, and had likewise before their eyes the example of their brethren of the ten tribes, who had lately been destroyed, did notwithstanding imitate and even exceed them in their idolatry. It sometimes happens, that they who have received the greatest favours from God abuse them, and thereby render themselves more guilty than those who have not enjoyed the same privileges. III. God declares, that he was still willing to pardon the *Jews*, notwithstanding their infidelity: *Return*, says he, *ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings*. God does not cast off those who have most offended him; he still preserves a favourable inclination towards them; he makes them proffers of mercy, and exhorts them to turn again to him. Lastly, It is to be observed, that the promise which God made to gather together the people of *Israel* and *Judah*, was in some sort accomplished, when the *Jews* returned from the captivity of *Babylon*; but since that deliverance concerned properly only those of *Judah*, and that the greatest part of *Israel* remained still dispersed; these promises extend to the times of the Gospel, when these two people were to be united again in the Christian church; and they will be fully accomplished, when the *Jewish* nation shall be converted.

CHAP. IV.

- I. **GOD** assures the *Jews*, that if they would be converted, he would have compassion on them.
- II. He threatens them, that if they continued in their rebellions, they should be subdued by the *Chaldeans*; and the prophet, by the comparison of a lion seeking his prey, of a strong wind which breaks and roots up all before it, and of a woman in travel, represents how terrible the coming of the *Chaldeans* would be, and the miserable condition to which *Jerusalem*, and all *Judea* would be reduced.

REFLECTIONS.

THE promises of pardon which God made to the *Jews*, if they would turn to him, teach us, how good and gracious the Lord is, and that the door of his mercy is open, even to those who have most offended him, provided they truly turn to him, and repent of their sins. But the severe threatenings that God joins to his promises, shew us, that he is righteous as well as merciful, and that they who obstinately persist in their sins, have nothing to hope from him. This we may learn by what befel the *Jews*. The prophet's description, in this chapter, of the miseries which were shortly to fall upon *Judea*, and of the desolation that would be occasioned by the *Chaldeans* in that country, is a picture of what happened to that people some years after, and may serve as an instance to convince us of the certainty of the divine threatenings, and the severity of God's judgments.

CHAP. V.

- I. **JEREMIAH** complains, that the wickedness of *Jerusalem* was so general, that there could hardly be found one good man in the city; He says, that the *Jews* were insensible under the divine corrections; that the mean and great were equally hardened; and that all

all had abandoned themselves to idolatry, to adultery, and all sorts of sins. II. He denounces the divine vengeance against the *Jews* for these sins; and though that people, seduced by false prophets, flattered themselves with peace, he declares, that the *Chaldeans* would quickly come against *Jerusalem*, but that nevertheless God would not utterly destroy his people. Lastly, The prophet exhorts the *Jews* to fear Almighty God, and to repent; he reproaches them with their blindness, their injustice, and other crimes; and complains especially, that the priests and the prophets were as corrupt as the people.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter contains very important instructions. We see here, I. How we may discover when a nation is extremely corrupt; which is certainly the case when the number of good men in it is very small; when the great men, and the rulers of the people, have forsaken the Lord, as well as the meanest; when impurity and injustice reign without opposition: when men have neither a grateful sense of the kindnesses of the Lord, nor dread his threatenings; and lastly, when the ministers whom God has appointed, instead of opposing the evil, follow the general corruption, countenance and encourage it, which the prophet calls *an amazing and horrible thing*. II. It is to be observed, that when the *Jews* were thus sunk in wickedness, they did not believe the words, nor dread the threatenings of the prophet, but flattered themselves in their wickedness, being persuaded that no harm would happen to them. Such is the blindness of men; they live in security, and dread not the judgments of God, even when they are most threatened. However, God at last executes his threatenings, as these words express, which are more than once repeated by *Jeremiah*: *Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?* Lastly, The reasons which the *Jews* had to dread the Almighty,

so strongly represented in this chapter, and the blindness of that people, ought to be well considered. This teaches us that it is strange stupidity in men not to fear that great God whose power is unbounded, who is Lord of the universe, and poureth his benefits upon them, sending rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons. By this means they expose themselves to his wrath, and deprive themselves of the effects of his mercy, since, as God says, *The iniquities of men turn away his favours, and withhold good things from them.*

CHAP. VI.

JEREMIAH declares, that God would shortly bring a nation from the north against *Jerusalem*, meaning the *Chaldeans*, who were in a few years to besiege and take that city, and to carry the *Jews* into captivity. God exhorts the *Jews* to repentance, assuring them, that he still loved them, but that the true cause of their destruction would be their impenitence, their incurable obstinacy, and the general corruption that reigned among them; their abandoning themselves to sins of every kind; and, above all, the sins of the priests and the prophets, and their contempt of the divine threatenings and remonstrances. III. The Lord declares that the offerings, sacrifices, and all the external worship of the *Jews*, should not screen them from their ruin, and even that those things should rather hasten it, and make it more dreadful.

REFLECTIONS.

WE must here observe, I. God's goodness and extreme tenderness, in warning men of the miseries that threaten them, and exhorting them to prevent their destruction by repentance. This goodness of the Lord appears in these remarkable words: *Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee.* II. The severe threatenings added to these exhortations, teach us, that how great soever God's patience and loving-kindness is when it has been long despised, it gives place

place to his wrath. This the *Jews* experienced a short time after these threatenings were denounced against them by *Jeremiah*. III. From this chapter we may collect, that men most provoke God's wrath, when they give up themselves in such a manner to evil, that they sin without shame or restraint; when they know not how to blush: when they disregard the exhortation of the ministers of the Lord; when God's ministers themselves live loose and disorderly lives, and when the rich and poor are alike corrupt. Lastly, It appears from this chapter, that while the *Jews* were filling up the measure of their iniquities, they still continued to offer to God incense and sacrifice; but that God rejected all the worship they pretended to pay him, and prepared a severe scourge for them. The wicked and ungodly sometimes perform the external duties of religion; but all the worship of men who fear not God, far from procuring his favour, only tends to provoke his wrath the more.

CHAP. VII.

I. **T**HIS chapter contains a grave and solemn reproof of the *Jews* for their sins, and especially for their hypocrisy and vain confidence, and for profaning the temple and the service of God. *Jeremiah* threatens them, that God would treat *Jerusalem*, and the temple as he had treated *Shiloh*, where the tabernacle formerly was, and as he had treated their brethren of *Ephraim*, that is, the *Israelites* of the ten tribes, who had been destroyed by the *Assyrians*. II. God forbids *Jeremiah* to intercede for the *Jews*; he says, it is in vain for them to offer sacrifices, whilst they gave themselves up to all kinds of sins, and worshipped idols, particularly *Moloch* and the queen of heaven, that is to say, the Moon. God declares, that for these sins the carcases of the *Jews* should be without burial, cast into the valley of *Tophet*, which was a place near *Jerusalem*, where the idolatrous *Jews* had offered their children to idols, making them pass through

through the fire. This chapter demands great attention.

REFLECTIONS.

THE grave remonstrances which *Jeremiah* addressed to the *Jews*, engage us to make the following reflections: I. That it is in vain for the wicked to glory in being members of the church, and to pay public worship to God, while they break his laws; that those who think to please God, by coming into his house, and performing acts of divine worship, and are at the same time unrighteous, unclean, impious, and hypocrites, decieve themselves, and turn the house of God into a den of thieves; and that the only means to obtain the favour of God, is to reform ourselves, and to do that which is right. II. Let us consider, that God, provoked with the sins of the *Jews*, threatens to treat them with the utmost severity, to destroy them and their temple, and forsake them, as he had done *Shiloh* in the days of *Samuel* the prophet, and afterwards the kingdom of the ten tribes. Let us grow wise by their example, as well as by the example of those christian churches, whose candlestick, that is the light of God's word, has been removed from them because they abused it. III. We learn, by God's forbidding *Jeremiah* to pray for the *Jews*, that when the anger of God is kindled against a people by their incurable obstinacy, the prayers even of the righteous cannot appease it. These words are very remarkable; *Do they provoke me to anger? saith the Lord: Do they not provoke themselves to the confusion of their own faces?* All that men do against God, when they offend him, cannot hurt him, but turns to their own confusion and great misery; and therefore it is only to prevent them from destroying themselves, that God is so kind to warn them of their danger. Lastly, We must take notice of the terrible and just vengeance of God, upon the crimes, and idolatries of the *Jews*, in destroying their city, and in causing

causing their carcases to be exposed in the very place where they had exercised their abominable idolatries. All these considerations ought to produce in our hearts a wholesome dread of the judgments of God, and should effectually move us to fear and serve him with sincerity.

CHAP. VIII.

THIS chapter has three parts. I. *Jeremiah* foretels, that the *Jews*, and even of the chief men among them, should be cast out, and their dead bodies taken out of their graves, and exposed to the sun, and moon, and the stars, which they had worshipped; and that the condition of the rest of the *Jews* should be so deplorable, that they would chuse death rather than life. II. the prophet shews the cause of all these calamities, which was the extreme hardness of that people, who would not be converted, notwithstanding the warnings God gave them; and particularly, the impiety of the teachers of the law, of the priests and prophets. Lastly he describes the desolation which the *Babylonians* were quickly to bring upon *Jerusalem* and all *Judea*.

REFLECTIONS.

HERE are these four reflections to be made. I. The first is, that *Jeremiah* foretold of the *Jews*, that their bones should be spread before the sun, and before the stars, which they had worshipped; and that such as lived at the time of their destruction, should wish for death rather than life. Herein we observe the dreadful, but just judgments of God upon that people, who had given up themselves to the sin of idolatry. The punishment of sinners bears usually some resemblance to the sins they have committed. II. The next reflection is drawn from that complaint of the prophet. *Shall they fall, and not rise? Shall he turn away, and not return? Why then is this people of Jerusalem sliddden back, by a perpetual backsliding?*
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Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? Nay they were not ashamed, neither could they blush. This teaches us, that when men are impenitent, and are no longer ashamed of their evil deeds, it is a sign their obstinacy is desperate, and their punishment at hand. III. God's frequent and earnest complaints of the hypocrisy and infidelity of the priests and of the prophets, shew how much God is offended, and what great evils threaten those who have the care of the church, and neglect the duties of their functions, and disgrace the sanctity of their character by a profane and irregular life. Lastly, Let us consider, that God, who brought so many calamities upon *Judea*, and exposed that country to the most cruel and merciless enemies, may still punish guilty people and churches after the same manner; but, if he does not punish offenders with temporal calamities, they shall not, for that reason, escape the rigour of his justice; for there are other punishments much more dreadful than any which *Jeremiah* in this chapter denounced against the *Jews*.

CHAP. IX.

I. *JEREMIAH* laments the destruction of the *Jews*, and their great sins, such as adultery, lying, deceit, cruelty, and the like. II. The prophet says, that *Jerusalem*, and all the land of *Judah*, would be reduced to a wilderness, and to a most deplorable condition, because the *Jews* had forsaken the law and the service of God; and he exhorts the inhabitants of the land, to bewail the calamities that were ready to fall upon them. Lastly, He declares to them, that neither their wisdom nor strength, nor their boasted privilege of circumcision, should secure them against the evils which threatened them; and that they would be treated as the neighbouring nations.

REFLECTIONS.

ON this chapter it must be considered, I. That as *Jeremiah* formerly lamented and bewailed the sins of the *Jews*, and their desolation, so all those who fear God, and especially his true ministers, are affected with a bitter grief at the sight of mens sins, and at the calamities which those sins bring upon them. II. We see in this chapter, that the *Jews* had let themselves loose to all manner of iniquity; that dissimulation, fraud, and perfidiousness, reigned among them to such a degree, that no man could be trusted, not even the nearest relations; that they gave themselves up to adultery and to uncleanness; and that there was scarce any more knowledge or fear of God in *Jerusalem*. When mens corruption is grown to such an height as this, a nation cannot long remain unpunished. This drew upon the *Jews* the utmost effects of God's wrath, as these words declare: *Who is the wise man that may understand this, and who is he to whom the mouth of the Lord hath spoken, that he may declare it, for what the land perisheth, and is burnt up like a wilderness, that none passeth through? And the Lord said, Because they have forsaken my law, which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein: but have walked after the imagination of their own heart.* III. The conclusion of this chapter teaches us, that we ought not to boast in our own wisdom, or strength, nor even in the outward marks of the divine covenant; but that we ought to glory only in knowing and fearing God, as these words of *Jeremiah* import, which are quoted by *St. Paul*, 1 Cor. i. and 2 Cor. x. *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord.*

CHAP. X.

IN this chapter *Jeremiah* exhorts the *Jews* not to imitate the folly of those that worshipped the stars, and that served idols which they themselves had made. To the vanity of idols he opposes the majesty of the supreme God, who is the Creator and Lord of the universe; and to the stupidity of idolaters, he opposes the happiness of the children of *Israel* in knowing the true God, and being in covenant with him. Next, he foretels that the *Jews* were going to be reduced to extreme misery, for having abandoned themselves to idolatry; nevertheless, he beseeches the Lord not to chastise them in his wrath, nor to destroy them utterly.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter treats of the idolatry of the heathens. I. Here we see exposed the madness of those who adored the stars of heaven, and idols of wood, gold, or silver, made by mens hands, and which, being without sense or life, were incapable of doing either good or hurt. All this *Jeremiah* represented to the *Jews*, to inspire them with an abhorrence of idolatry, to convince them of their great guilt in falling into it, and to prevent them from running into it, when they were dispersed among the idolatrous nations. These reflections engage us to praise God for giving us the knowledge of himself; and should keep us, not only from idolatry, but from every thing that has the least tendency towards it, and from all superstitions and vain notions and practices. II. The comparison here made between the impotence and vanity of idols, and the majesty of the Almighty God, who created heaven and earth, and governs it, should inspire us with sentiments of fear and reverence for that great God; and lead us to say with *Jeremiah*, *There is none like unto thee, O Lord; thou art great, and thy name is great in might. Who would not fear thee*

thee, O king of nations? For to thee doth it appertain.

III. We here see, that the *Jews* were brought to desolation by the *Babylonians*, because they forsook the service of God, and the allegiance they owed him. So severe a punishment proves, that the wrath of God overtakes those, who, after having known God, do not glorify him as God. Lastly, We may gather from the last words of this chapter, that God chastises men because his chastisements are needful for them, but does not do it for their destruction; therefore we ought humbly to submit ourselves to the chastening dispensations of Providence, and use this prayer of the prophet; *O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.*

CHAP. XI.

I. **G**OD sets before the *Jews* the covenant he had made with them when their fathers came out of *Egypt*, and reproaches them for having obstinately broken it by their sins, and especially by idolatry. II. He tells them, that to punish them he would visit them with his rod, and forbids *Jeremiah* to pray for them. III. The prophet complains of the inhabitants of *Anathoth*, which was the city where *Jeremiah* dwelt, because they would have hindered him from speaking to them, and would even have taken away his life.

REFLECTIONS.

THE first instruction which this chapter affords us, is taken from the curse which God denounces against those who keep not his covenant. Let us reflect on this a little, and remember, that God has made a more excellent covenant with us than with the *Jews*; that this new covenant engages us still more strictly to hear his voice, and to do all that he hath commanded us; wherefore if we break it, we shall incur a much heavier punishment. We ought to consider farther, that it is not only by worshipping idols, that the

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the divine covenant is broken ; but that this may be done likewise, by breaking the vows which we have made to God, and by withdrawing our hearts from him to give them to the world. God complains in this chapter, that the inhabitants of *Jerusalem* had conspired against him, and were incurably built upon evil ; which so highly provoked God against them, that he forbade *Jeremiah* even to pray for them. This teaches us, that when the wickedness of men is come to its full height, when they agree in nothing else but in provoking the Lord, and when his laws are generally despised, he spares them no longer, and even the prayers of the righteous become useless. Lastly, We should consider well the threatenings denounced in this chapter against the *Jews*, and in particular against the inhabitants of *Anathoth*, who would have hindered *Jeremiah* from prophesying in the name of the Lord, and would have taken away his life too. It is a very great sin to reject the word of the Lord, to refuse to hear his faithful servants, and even attempt to stop their mouths ; and God will call those churches and people, who are guilty of this sin, to a severe account. However, the ministers of the Lord, in imitation of *Jeremiah*, ought neither to be provoked nor discouraged, when they meet with the like opposition.

CHAP. XII.

I. *JEREMIAH* asks of God, why the wicked *Jews*, who reject his ministry, still enjoyed prosperity. The Lord answers, that he must prepare to meet with still greater opposition at *Jerusalem* ; but that he should see the accomplishment of his threatenings ; and that this people should soon be forsaken, and carried captive into a strange country : from whence, however, he would bring them back again.

II. God declares, that he would likewise punish the neighbouring nations, because of the evils they had done his people ; but if these nations embraced the

worship of the true God, they also should be esteemed his people.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT we are to consider upon this chapter is, I. Never to believe that the wicked and the hypocrites shall escape unpunished, or that they are truly happy because God spares them for a while; nor that the threatenings of God are less sure, because he defers the execution of them. II. That the servants of God ought not to be discouraged, though they should be exposed to the gainfaying, and the scoffs of the wicked; nay, that those who are resolved to discharge their duty with integrity, have reason to expect it. III. That the threatenings of the Lord have, soon or late, their effect; and that neither the covenant of God, nor the love he has shewn to any nation, can secure it from his anger, when he has been provoked to it by repeated instances of rebellion; as we are taught by these remarkable expressions: *I have forsaken mine house, I have left mine heritage, I have given the dearly-beloved of my soul into the hands of her enemies.* IV. God revealed his purpose, first to chastise his own people, and afterwards the neighbouring nations, and even to receive those idolatrous nations into covenant with him. By this we may see that God is just and merciful; that he has no respect of persons, and regards only integrity and uprightness. This appears evidently in the calling of the Gentiles, after the coming of our Lord *Jesus Christ*.

CHAP. XIII.

I. THE prophet represents to the *Jews*, by the figure of a rotten girdle, which was good for nothing, that the covenant they had made with God was going to be broken, and that he would reject them, because they had forsaken him. II. He exhorts all the people, and particularly the king, and the great men, to humble themselves before this destruction came upon them.

them. III. He laments their destruction, and declares, that their invincible obstinacy would bring it upon them.

REFLECTIONS.

THE instructions which this chapter affords us, are these: I. That our covenant with God procures us very great advantages, and unites us to him in the strictest manner; but if we break it, as the *Jews* did, it will become unprofitable to us. II. That when God causes us to hear his threatenings, we should humble ourselves; and as the great are commonly the chief authors of the corruption of the people, and of the miseries consequent to it, it is but reasonable they should, by their humiliation, endeavour to avert the wrath of God. This is the reflection we should make on the exhortation which *Jeremiah* addresses, not only to the people, but to the king and queen, to give glory to God, and to humble themselves before the darkness came upon them. III. The tears which *Jeremiah* shed on account of the obstinacy of the *Jews*, and the miseries that were to come upon them, shew, that when mens obstinacy is past remedy, good men, and particularly the ministers of God, can do nothing more than sigh and bewail the wretched condition of those that perish. IV. These words, *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil*; deserve to be well considered, as they describe the strange perverseness of the *Jews*, and teach us, that by resisting the grace of God, and by an habitual course of sin, men arrive to that degree of corruption, that it is hard to recover them from it, and many never do recover.

CHAP. XIV.

THE prophecy contained in this chapter was occasioned by a great drought which God had afflicted *Judea* with, and which *Jeremiah* here describes. To

appease the wrath of God in that time of trouble, and to obtain rain, the prophet intercedes for the people: but God tells him, that his prayers were in vain, as well as the prayers and fastings of the *Jews*; that they would shortly be extirpated by all sorts of plagues; and that those false prophets, who had promised them peace, should be confounded, and involved in the general ruin. Nevertheless, *Jeremiah* beseeches God to pardon the *Jews*, and not to cast them off entirely in this extremity.

REFLECTIONS.

FROM this chapter we are to learn these four things: I. That, as God sent a drought and famine upon *Judea*, to signify to the *Jews* that they had provoked him, and that he should quickly come to destroy them, so we ought to consider all temporal calamities as tokens of the wrath of God, and incitements to repentance. II. That it is the duty of those who are set over the church, and of all its true members, to labour by their prayers, as *Jeremiah* did, to prevent and avert the judgments of God; or at least to moderate them, if they cannot be wholly averted. III. That neither the zeal and intercession of the righteous, nor the prayers and fastings of an obstinate and impenitent people, can prevent the divine vengeance. This the Lord humbly teaches us, when he tells the prophet: *Pray not for this people for their good. When they fast, I will not hear their cry.* And when he declares that the *Jews*, should be consumed, not only by drought and famine, but likewise by war and pestilence. Lastly, The ministers of the Lord ought seriously to reflect upon what is here said, of the crime and punishment of those false prophets, who promised peace to the *Jews*, at the very time their ruin was approaching; that it may be a warning to them never to flatter sinners, nor lull them in security; but to speak always with zeal and sincerity what God has commanded them. We ought likewise to learn
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from hence, to hearken to those that declare the truth to us sincerely and without flattery.

CHAP. XV.

GOD again declares to *Jeremiah*, who had interceded for the *Jews*, that his prayers should not be heard; that their ruin was determined, because they had entirely forsaken the Lord; and that they were to be delivered into the hands of their enemies, who would destroy them; to the wild beasts, and fowls of the air, who would devour them; and to all kinds of miseries. The prophet complains of the ill treatment he met with from the *Jews*, because of his threatening them with the judgments of God; but the Lord comforts him, and assures him of his protection.

REFLECTIONS.

FROM this chapter we may gather these three instructions. I. That although the godly are acceptable to God, and their prayers have great power with him, yet they cannot prevail in favour of those whose hardness is desperate. This God declares after the strongest manner, when he tells *Jeremiah*, that though *Moses* and *Samuel*, who had formerly turned away the wrath of God from the people of *Israel* by their intercession, should pray to him for the *Jews*, he would not regard them. II. The next instruction is, that the punishment of sinners, be it never so severe, is so just, that they do not deserve to be lamented; as God shews in these words, *Who shall have pity on thee, O Jerusalem? or who shall bemoan thee? or who shall go aside to ask how thou dost? because thou hast forsaken me.* III. The ministers of *Jesus Christ* see, by the example of *Jeremiah*, that they are often called to tell men harsh and disagreeable things, which may expose men to the hatred of the wicked, but that nevertheless they are bound to obey the commands which God gives them, and to keep themselves pure and undefiled in the midst of the general corruption; by which means they

they may be assured, that God will take them under his protection; and that they shall never fail of his assistance.

CHAP. XVI.

I. **G**OD, to convince the *Jews*, and *Jeremiah* too, that the utmost calamities were coming upon *Judea*, forbids him to marry, or to go into any house of mourning to comfort the afflicted, or be present at any feast. II. He tells him next, that the crimes of the *Jews*, and their prodigious hardness of heart, would be the cause of all their miseries; but he promises nevertheless to bring them again from the north country, that is, from *Babylon*, after they had suffered the punishment of their sins.

REFLECTIONS.

I. God forbid *Jeremiah* to marry, to enter into the houses of mourning, or to go to any feast, that by this behaviour of the prophet he might affect the *Jews* the more, and make them understand, that the time of their desolation drew near; that the children which should be born should be exposed to all kinds of calamities, and come to a fatal end; that the dead should be unburied and unlamented; and that this people should soon have no room to rejoice. Here we shall take notice, that in a time of calamity God would have us humble ourselves, and even abstain from things which we might lawfully do at another time. II. God positively declares in this chapter, that all these evils will befall the *Jews*, because they had forsaken him, and had done even worse than their fathers; that he took notice of all their ways; and that he would recompence their sins double. This plainly shews that God is just; that he sees and knows all the actions of men; and that when they heighten their sins, they force him, as it were, to take vengeance. III. We see, however, in this chapter, that God still preserved sentiments of love towards the *Jews*, since
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he was pleased to put an end to the captivity, and bring them again from *Babylon*, after he had chastised them for their iniquity, and brought them into the right way. Thus God deals with men; if he sends afflictions to punish them, he does not wholly reject them, and always pardons those who make a right use of his corrections.

CHAP. XVII.

I. *JEREMIAH* declares to the *Jews*, that their sins, and particularly their idolatry, would speedily occasion their ruin; that the trust which they put in men could not secure them; and that, in order to be happy, they must rely upon God alone, who searches and knows the heart, who is the Judge of all men, and hateth iniquity. II. The prophet complains of the injuries they did him, protests he had not desired the destruction of the *Jews*, and had only told them what God had commanded him to declare. III. He exhorts the king and the people to repentance, and in particular to prevent the profaning of the Sabbath-day; promising them, that God would bless them if they did; and threatening them with utter destruction if they continued in their sins.

REFLECTIONS.

THE reflections to be made on this chapter are, I. That as the *Jews* were given up to their enemies because they had provoked the Lord; so God will, sooner or later, punish those who offend him. II. That it is in vain to think of being secure in man's assistance, when we have God for our friend; and in general, that those who confide in men, and in the arm of flesh, are accursed of God; but that he blesses all those that trust in him; and that there is no condition more happy and secure than the condition of that man who trusts in God and fears him. III. We should carefully attend to these words of the prophet: *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked,*

wicked, who can know it? I the Lord search their heart, I try the reins, even to give to every man according to his ways. This should teach us to distrust ourselves, to study to know our own hearts, and to fear God, whose knowledge is infinite, and who is the Judge of all men. IV. This chapter teaches us, that those who acquire riches unjustly, do not long enjoy them. Lastly, Persons of a public character have here several very important lessons. The ministers of the Lord should learn, by the example of *Jeremiah*, not to think it strange if the wicked reject their ministry; to be faithful in the discharge of it, and always to abound with love and charity for those to whom they are sent, though they meet with an unkind reception. And the earnest exhortations addressed by the prophet to kings and rulers, concerning the observance of the Sabbath, shew, that it is the duty of princes and magistrates, to perform what God commands, to reverence the divine service, and to prevent its being profaned. This is the way to obtain the divine favour, as, on the contrary, irreligion and impiety deprive kingdoms and states of his protection.

CHAP. XVIII.

I. *JEREMIAH* represents to the *Jews*, by the comparison of a potter and the clay, that God might destroy them, because of their sins; and establish them again, if they were converted. II. He exhorts them to repentance, and threatens them, that if they continued to forget God, they should be desolate. Lastly, He again complains of the conspiracies which the *Jews* had formed to take away his life; and he denounces the vengeance of the Lord against them.

REFLECTIONS.

THE comparison of a potter, which is proposed in this chapter, does not signify that God has created men to destroy them, or render them unhappy, by the
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the mere effect of his will ; but the design of it was, to teach the *Jews* that they were in the hands of God, and that he was able to punish them, and afterwards to restore them ; in the same manner as a potter, who, thinking to make a good vessel, and not succeeding, might break it, and make another with the same clay. Thus God himself explains it, when he says, that if a nation which he had purposed to destroy, turned from its iniquity, he would not destroy it ; and, on the contrary, if a nation which he had determined to bless, did not hearken to his voice, he would withdraw his favour from that nation. He declares, moreover, that though he had threatened to destroy the *Jews*, he was still ready to pardon them, and that he would not put his threatening in execution, unless they obstinately persisted in their impatience and hardness of heart. From this doctrine, which is of great importance, it appears, that God never wants either power or goodness to do good to men ; that he is perfectly just ; and that no evil befalls them but what they bring upon themselves. We see in the impious proceeding of the *Jews*, who contrived to kill *Jeremiah*, that the servants of God, by discharging their duty, sometimes incur the hatred of the wicked. As for the last verses of this chapter, where *Jeremiah* seems to make imprecations against the *Jews*, they must not be understood as if he had desired their ruin : it appears from this whole Book, and even from this place, that he had prayed for them ; and he calls God to witness, in the foregoing chapter, that he did not wish for their calamity ; but these are threatenings which he denounces from God, in quality of prophet, to shew, that their destruction was inevitable, and that evils of every kind were to fall upon them and their children.

CHAP. XIX.

THE design of this chapter is, to make the *Jews* understand, that God, for the punishment of their idolatry, and especially for having sacrificed their children

children to the idol *Moloch*, otherwise called *Baal*, in the valley of *Tophet*, would cause them to perish in so lamentable a manner, that they should eat their children during the siege of *Jerusalem*; and that their carcases should be eaten by the beasts in the same valley. This the prophet represents by breaking an earthen vessel in that place; signifying thereby, that God would destroy them with the same ease, and as suddenly as a man breaks an earthen pot; and that as the pieces of a broken pot cannot be joined together, and are of no use, so likewise their ruin should be total, and most of them should perish without recovery.

REFLECTIONS.

I. IT must here be observed in the first place, that the *Jews* had been guilty of the blackest crimes, and of the most execrable idolatry that ever was heard of, since they were come to that pass, as even to burn their own children in honour of their idols. This is a very remarkable proof, that not only those that know not God, but even those who have known him, and profess to worship him, may fall into the greatest wickedness, and renounce all sentiments of religion and nature too, when they have once lost the fear of God, and have given themselves up to blindness and hardness of heart. II. We must consider, that God declared the *Jews* should be killed, and exposed dead in the same valley, where they had sacrificed their children to idols, and should be reduced by famine, to eat the flesh of their sons and of their daughters. In this event, the justice of God is very evident, who frequently punishes men by those very things where-with they had offended, and makes those who had been distinguished by his favours, become, upon their abuse of them, examples of the most severe vengeance. The similitude of the earthen pot broken in peices is very remarkable; well expressing the facility with which God can destroy sinners, and shewing, that nothing can deliver or recover them, when he is pleased to punish them.

CHAP. XX.

A PRIEST, named *Pashur*, struck *Jeremiah*, and threw him into prison, for having foretold the destruction of *Jerusalem*; but *Jeremiah* told him, that he himself should be carried captive to *Babylon*, with all his family, and all his friends; and that he should die there. The prophet complains of being exposed to the hatred of the wicked *Jews*, and expresses his grief upon that account.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter presents us with three principal reflections: I. We see how *Jeremiah* was beaten, and put into prison, for having prophesied against the *Jews*; but that he did not forbear, however, to foretel their destruction; and in particular denounced *Pashur's* doom, declaring, that he should feel the effects of the divine vengeance. Thus the wicked are provoked with, and persecute those who speak to them in the name of God; but the true ministers of the Lord always do what God commands them, and those who set themselves against them receive the just reward of their malice. II. We see here, how *Jeremiah* was astonished and afflicted at the opposition he met with from the *Jews*: but that he strengthened himself, nevertheless, by trusting in God. All who suffer for righteousness sake should consider this, that they may not be discouraged when they meet with obstacles. III. The last reflection relates to the last verses of this chapter, in which *Jeremiah* says, *Cursed be the day in which I was born*: It might be observed, that the prophet does not speak of himself here, but represents the sentiments of the *Jews*, what they would say at the time of their destruction, which would be so terrible, that it would be more happy for them if they had never been born, and they themselves would wish for death. But suppose these words should relate to *Jeremiah*, we must not believe that he was guilty of

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murmuring or impatience; for in the same chapter he appears animated with a joy and confidence which led him to praise God; but only that he meant by these proverbial ways of speaking, in use at that time, to shew what a wretched thing it was to live among a people so corrupt, and how much he was grieved to see their obstinacy, and to consider the miseries that would so heavily fall upon them.

CHAP. XXI.

THAT which is related in this chapter, happened when the *Chaldeans* besieged *Jerusalem*, under the reign of *Zedekiah*. This prince having sent to consult *Jeremiah* what he was to do, the prophet tells him, that as God had resolved to deliver the city to the *Chaldeans*, they must submit to them; that they who did so, would save their lives; but if the king and people refused to surrender, they would be exposed to the greatest desolations of war. He also exhorts the king, and the magistrates, to reform themselves, and to do justice to every body.

REFLECTIONS.

HERE we are chiefly to consider the advice which *Jeremiah* gave to king *Zedekiah* and the *Jews*, to submit themselves to the *Chaldeans*; declaring that if they did so, and obeyed the voice of God, they should be spared; but if not, they should perish by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence. We see by this, that God had indeed resolved to deliver *Jerusalem* to the *Chaldeans*; but that he had not resolved their destruction; and that it was still in their own power to save their lives. Thus God gave proofs of his goodness, at the same time that he exercised his justice. This too shews very plainly, that the perdition of sinners is not so determined but they may prevent it; God is always inclined to pardon them and spare them, even when he chastises them; and if at last he overwhelms them with his judgments, it is because he is forced to it by their

their impenitence. This teaches us likewise, that when God will correct us, we must submit to it, lest by our resistance we draw upon ourselves greater evils. Lastly, This chapter teaches judges and magistrates, that the exercise of justice is one of the most effectual means to prevent the judgments of God, and procure his protection.

CHAP. XXII.

I. *JEREMIAH* exhorts the king of *Judah*, and the people to repentance, and particularly to the practice of justice; threatening them, if they did not, that *Jerusalem* should be laid waste. II. He foretels what should happen to the posterity of *Josiah*, king of *Judah*; he says, that *Shallum*, otherwise named *Jehoahaz*, should be carried into *Egypt*, and die there; that *Jehoiakim*, his brother and successor, should be deprived of burial; and that *Comiah*, otherwise called *Jeconiah*, should be carried to *Babylon* by the *Chaldeans*; that he should die there, and have no son to reign after him.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may learn from this chapter, that of the things which have the greatest tendency to secure the favour and protection of God to any people, one is, when judges render justice to every one impartially. If the kings and princes of *Judah* had discharged their duty in this matter, according to the exhortations of the prophet, they would have been spared; but for having failed therein, they were destroyed, and the whole nation perished with them. There is another passage in this chapter, which deserves to be taken notice of; that place, I mean, where it is said, that those who attempt to raise and establish their families by wicked ways, and by covetousness, shall never prosper. But the principal reflection to be made on what has been read, relates to the kings here spoken of. All that *Jeremiah* had said came unto them. *Shallum*, son of king

king *Josiah*, was taken by the king of *Egypt*, and carried into that country, where he died; *Jehoiakim* fell into the hands of the *Chaldeans*, was carried in chains to *Babylon*, and so was *Jeconiah*, who had no successor. Thus God fulfilled the predictions of *Jeremiah*, and punished all their wicked and idolatrous princes. Moreover, the impiety of the decendants of the good and pious king *Josiah*, who all of them came to a tragical end, shews, that the piety of parents will not skreen their children from the judgments of God, if those children provoke the Lord by their disobedience.

CHAP. XXIII.

JEREMIAH threatens the wicked shepherds, that is, the magistrates, the priests and the prophets, accusing them of being the cause of all the abominable practices which prevailed in the kingdom of *Judah*; and he foretels, that God would raise in the family of *David* a great king, who should be the deliverer of his people. After this he complains, that the priests and prophets of *Judah* were still worse than those of the kingdom of *Israel*; he says, that they abandoned themselves to the utmost excesses, and, besides this, deceived the people, falsely boasting of revelations, and promising them peace; and he denounces the divine vengeance against them.

REFLECTIONS.

HERE let us consider, I. That God's promise, to give his people good shepherds, and to raise in the house of king *David* a righteous prince, was fulfilled, not only when the *Jews* returned from *Babylon*, under the conduct of *Zorobabal*, who was a descendant of *David*, and had *Ezra*, *Jeshua* and *Nehemiah*, and other good men for their governors; but chiefly when God sent *Jesus Christ*, born of that family, to be the great Shepherd and redeemer of the church. II. The complaints that God here makes against false shepherds,

shepherds, and chiefly against the priests and prophets of *Jerusalem*, are worthy our whole attention. The Lord says, they were worse than those of *Samaria*, who were however idolators; that the land was filled with adulteries, perjuries, and all manner of wickedness; but that the prophets were the occasion of it: That if they had made known to the *Jews* the will of God, they might have been converted from their sins; but instead of that, they had deceived them, telling them there was nothing to fear. Ministers, who are sent by God, should attend to these words, and faithfully record them in their minds. But it is a great misfortune indeed, when, instead of faithfully declaring the will of the Lord, and turning sinners from the error of their ways, they flatter and soothe them in their crimes, and withal set them a bad example. God declares very expressly, that he is angry with these wicked shepherds, and that they cannot escape his knowledge and vengeance. By this every one may see of what consequence it is, that pastors and rulers should discharge their duty. But since God threatens the people as well as the prophets, it is evident, that if those who seduce others are guilty, those who suffer themselves to be seduced will be justly punished; that we ought therefore to be well instructed in the will of God, and after we have known it, should be afraid to offend God by disobedience; and to this end should always remember, what he himself says in this chapter, *Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? Do I not fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?*

CHAP. XXIV.

FOR the right understanding of this chapter, we must know, that some years before *Nebuchadnezzar* king of *Babylon* came to destroy the city and temple of *Jerusalem*, part of the people had already been carried to *Babylon*, with *Jeconiah* king of *Judah*. In that time the prophet *Jeremiah* had the vision which is
here

here related, and in which he saw two baskets of figs, the one good and the other bad; by which God signified to him the difference there would be, between the *Jews* that were carried away with *Jeconiah*, and those that remained at *Jerusalem*; which was, that the first should be preserved, and that God would restore them; whereas the others should be almost all destroyed by war, famine, and pestilence, together with *Zedekiah*, the last king of *Judah*; and that those who should go down to *Egypt*, after the taking of *Jerusalem*, should there come to a most miserable end. Thus it happened eleven years after this prophecy.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to consider upon this chapter, I. That when *Jeconiah*, and a part of the people, were carried away captives to *Babylon*, it should have been a warning to the *Jews* of their approaching destruction. Thus God punishes men by degrees; and, before he destroys them quite, warns them by several corrections that their destruction is not far off; and if they prevent not his judgments, they will feel the weight of them. II. It is to be observed next, that the *Jews* who were first carried away to *Babylon* were happily restored; whereas those that stayed at *Jerusalem*, and thought themselves much more happy than their captive countrymen, but were much more wicked and guilty than they, since they made a very ill use of what had happened to their brethren, were almost all destroyed by the sword, pestilence, and famine, when *Nebuchadnezzar* came the last time against *Jerusalem*. *Zedekiah* their king came to a fatal end, with all the great men of his court; and those among them who went down into *Egypt*, after the taking of *Jerusalem*, felt the heaviest load of the divine judgments. This example sheweth, that those whom God punishes are not always the most guilty, nor the most miserable; and that sinners who enjoy prosperity, and whom God bears longer with, are treated with the greatest severity, when they persist in their impenitence.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXV.

THIS chapter, contains three remarkable things.

I. That the *Jews*, for despising the exhortations of the prophets, and, above all, those they had received from *Jeremiah*, during the space of twenty-three years, were to be given up to the *Babylonians*. II. That the captivity of *Babylon* should last seventy years. III. That since God did not spare his own people, he would not spare other nations; that the *Egyptians*, the several people of *Arabia*, the *Philistines*, the *Edomites*, the *Moabites*, and the other neighbours of the *Jews*, together with the *Medes* and *Persians*, should be punished; after which, the *Babylonians* themselves should be destroyed. This *Jeremiah* represents, by saying, that all the nations should drink of the cup of the wine of the wrath of God; which is a figurative way of speaking used by the prophets, to signify the divine vengeance.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE first reflection to be made upon this chapter is, that God bears with men with great patience; that he exhorts them a long time to repentance; but that if they abuse his long-suffering, he at last executes his threatenings. Thus God, after he had in vain called the *Jews* to conversion by the ministry of *Jeremiah*, for the space of twenty-three years, brought the king of *Babylon* to destroy them. II. God, to comfort his people, promised to bring them back from the *Babylonish* captivity at the end of seventy years; and then to punish the *Babylonians* themselves. These seventy years began in the reign of *Jehoiakim*, when a great number of *Jews* were carried to *Babylon*, with part of the sacred vessels of the temple; and they ended at the time when the *Jews* returned into their own country, by the permission of *Cyrus* king of *Persia*. III. It is to be observed, that the *Egyptians*, the *Philistines*, and the other nations here named, were brought

under subjection to the king of *Babylon*, as *Jeremiah* had foretold ; and that after this, the *Babylonians* were subdued by the *Medes* and *Persians*. God here speaks as the Lord of the world, who disposes of kings and nations as he pleases ; and these great events, which *Jeremiah* and the other prophets had so expressly foretold, are incontestible proofs of the divinity of the prophecies, as well as of the truth of God's promises, his protection of his church, and his justice in punishing its oppressors. Here likewise we should consider, that if God spares not his church, other nations, and the wicked in general, shall not escape his vengeance ; and that if he made use of wicked kings to punish nations, he at length rendered to those proud and impious princes, who had been the instruments of his vengeance, the punishment that was due to them ; which should teach us to adore that Providence which overrules all things with wisdom, justice, and goodness.

CHAP. XXVI.

JEREMIAH still persisting to foretel the destruction of *Jerusalem* and the temple, the priests lay hold of him, and, with the people, require that he should be put to death. But *Jeremiah*, without being discouraged, continued to foretel the same things in the presence of the magistrates and judges, who after they had heard him, sent him away without doing any harm to him ; God having made an officer of the king, named *Ahikam*, his instrument in saving the life of the prophet. At the end of this chapter there is mention made of a prophet, named *Urijah*, whom *Jehoiakim* caused to be assassinated, for having foretold the same things as *Jeremiah*.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter sets three notable examples before us. The first is, that of the priests and the people of *Jerusalem*, who would have put *Jeremiah* to death, because he foretold the ruin of their city and temple. This
unjust

unjust and impious proceeding of the *Jews*, shews, that their wickedness was exceeding great; and that the servants of God are sometimes exposed to great dangers from those who cannot bear their remonstrances. The same reflections may be made upon the crime which king *Jehoiakim* committed, in slaying the prophet *Urijah*, who had foretold the same things as *Jeremiah* did. This persecution of the faithful servants of God was one thing which hastened the destruction of the *Jews*. The second example is that of *Jeremiah*, who finding himself threatened with death, told the *Jews* that they might take away his life, but still he persisted in exhorting and threatening them in the name of God. This character of patience, moderation, and meekness, and at the same time of zeal and courage, ought to be imitated by all those who exercise the sacred ministry, when it is their lot to suffer in the discharge of their duty. Lastly, We have the example of several magistrates, and especially of *Ahikam*, one of the chief ministers of state, who took the part of *Jeremiah*, and acknowledged that he spake to them in the name of the Lord; From whence we may infer, that God protected this prophet, and does in his providential care raise up persons, and find out ways for securing his servants, who are unjustly oppressed. Magistrates and great men ought to meditate upon this history, and learn from hence to fear God, and to defend the innocent, and particularly his faithful ministers; herein imitating *Ahikam*, as well as king *Hezekiah*, who is likewise mentioned in this chapter; who, instead of being angry with the prophet *Micah*, humbled himself, and by his humiliation averted the wrath of God.

CHAP. XXVII.

I. **T**HE kings bordering upon *Judea*, having sent ambassadors to *Zedekiah* king of *Judah*, God orders *Jeremiah* to send bonds and yokes to those kings, to signify, by this mysterious action, that those

kings should be so far from delivering *Zedekiah*, as he expected, that they should themselves be brought under the dominion of the king of *Babylon*. The prophet tells them to submit to that king; and shews, that the empire of the *Babylonians* should last till the time of the grandson of *Nebuchadnezzar*, after which it should come to an end. II. He exhorts *Zedekiah*, and the people of *Jerusalem*, to submit themselves to the king of *Babylon*, and not to give credit to the false prophets, who made them believe that the vessels of the temple, which had been carried to *Babylon* with king *Jehoiakim*, should be brought back again to *Jerusalem*. *Jeremiah* declares, that on the contrary, the remainder of the holy vessels should likewise be taken away, when *Nebuchadnezzar* came to destroy the city and temple.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are four observations to be made upon this chapter: I. We observe, that *Jeremiah* sent bonds and yokes to the kings living near *Jerusalem*, to shew them that they should be conquered by *Nebuchadnezzar* king of *Babylon*, who is here called the servant of the Lord, because he was to execute the decrees of Providence. This should have taught *Zedekiah* not to expect any assistance from those kings against the *Babylonians*. This action of *Jeremiah*, which the ambassadors of those princes were witnesses of, tended likewise to convince them that the Lord, in whose name *Jeremiah* spake, was the only true God; which they must needs be convinced of, when they fell under the dominion of the *Babylonians*, who conquered them all, one after the other. II. It is to be observed, that *Jeremiah* foretold, that the monarchy of the *Babylonians* should subsist till the grandson of *Nebuchadnezzar*, which was verified by the event; that monarchy ending in *Belshazzar*, when *Babylon* was taken by the *Medes* and *Persians*. These are very express predictions, which prove and confirm most evidently the divine authority of *Jeremiah's* prophecies. III. The
exhor-

exhortations of the prophet addressed to *Zedekiah* and the *Jews*, to submit themselves willingly to the king of *Babylon*, teach us, that it is in vain to pretend to resist the will of God ; and that when he has made known his will to us, and thinks fit to chastise us, it is best humbly to submit to it. Lastly, we see in this chapter, that God forbad the *Jews* to hearken to the false prophets, who flattered them and promised them peace, and the return of the holy vessels. It is a great sin in those who are set over the church, to dissemble the will of God, and flatter sinners by a base compliance ; and the true servants of God are those who declare the truth sincerely and without disguise.

CHAP. XXVIII.

A FALSE prophet, named *Hananiah*, opposes *Jeremiah*, and foretels that *Jerusalem* should not be taken by the *Babylonians* ; that within two years, the holy vessels, which had been carried away to *Babylon*, should be brought back to *Jerusalem*, and that *Jechoniah* should return from thence with all the captives. And to confirm his prediction, he breaks a wooden yoke that *Jeremiah* had made by order of God, which represented, that the *Jews* should be made subject to the king of *Babylon*, as we read in the foregoing chapter ; but *Jeremiah*, when he had told *Hananiah* that the event would shew the falseness of his predictions, causes a yoke of iron to be made, instead of the wooden yoke which *Hananiah* had broken, and prophecies that he should die that year, which accordingly came to pass.

REFLECTIONS.

THE chief consideration this chapter affords us is, that at the very time the destruction of the *Jews* drew near, there were among them false prophets, who promised them peace, and a return of the sacred vessels of the temple, and of their captive brethren. There have been in all ages false teachers in the church, who have lulled

lulled the people in their security ; but it is a dangerous thing to hearken to them, and God is very gracious when he sends faithful ministers, who do not flatter their people, nor conceal any thing that they are commanded to speak to men for their good. The courage of *Jeremiah* in resisting *Hananiah*, shews, that we should never give way to the wicked when they attempt to seduce others ; but should oppose them always, and discharge our duty with boldness. The punishment of *Hananiah*, who died according to the prediction of *Jeremiah*, might have taught the *Jews* that *Hananiah* was a false prophet, and that the rest of *Jeremiah's* threatenings should be fulfilled. This is an example of the Divine vengeance, which pursues those who resist God and his holy word, and who seduce others to sin or error.

CHAP. XXIX.

IN this letter, wrote to the *Jews* who had been carried away to *Babylon* with king *Jeconiah*, the prophet *Jeremiah* does four things: I. He exhorts them to stay in *Babylon*, and to be faithful to the king and government of that country, and not to believe the prophets, who promised them that they should be delivered before the seventy years of their captivity were expired. II. He promises, that at the end of that time God would bring them again to *Jerusalem*. III. He tells them that the *Jews*, who were yet at *Jerusalem*, and their king *Zedekiah*, were going to be reduced to the utmost desolation. IV. He foretels the punishment of *Ahab* and *Zedekiah*, two lying prophets, and of *Shemaiah*, who had written letters from *Babylon* to *Jerusalem* against the prophet *Jeremiah*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE order that *Jeremiah* gave the *Jews*, who were at *Babylon*, to stay there, and to pray for the prosperity of that city, shews us, that God would have us live in submission to the kings under whose government

ment we are placed, and to pray for the prosperity of their dominions; and that when God thinks fit to chastise us, we ought to acquiesce in it, and to continue in the condition to which he is pleased to reduce us. II. The clear and repeated promises *Jeremiah* made the *Jews*, that they should be sent away free at the end of seventy years, express the love of God towards them, and the divinity of this prophecy. III. It is to be remarked, that though the *Jews* who were at *Jerusalem*, seemed to be in a more happy state than those who were at *Babylon*, yet they were to be most severely scourged by God, for not improving by the misery of their captive brethren, and for continuing to despise the voice of the Lord. Thus God proportions his punishments to the sins of men, and those which he punishes last are usually treated with the greatest severity, because they have longest abused his patience. IV. We find in this chapter, that there were at *Jerusalem* and at *Babylon* false prophets, who railed against *Jeremiah*, and who seduced the people, and were moreover impure and corrupt men. God, for the trial of men, has in all ages permitted that there should be seducers, to oblige us to be upon our guard against such people, according to the exhortation of our Lord, and to distinguish them from the true ministers of God. But we likewise observe, in the punishment that God inflicted upon the false prophets here mentioned, that God condemns all such; since *Ahab* and *Zedekiah* were burnt by the king of *Babylon*, and *Shemaiah* perished with his family, without seeing, the deliverance of the *Jews*; whereas *Jeremiah*, who spake with sincerity, experienced the divine protection.

CHAP. XXX.

THE prophet *Jeremiah*, after he had declared to the *Jews* that they should be led captives to *Babylon*, promises here, that God would deliver them from it; that the *Babylonians* should feel his vengeance; and that after he had chastised his people he would display his infinite power for their restoration.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

THE reflections to be made on this chapter, relate to the love of God, his power, justice, and faithfulness. The love of God towards this people appears in his promising to deliver them from the yoke of the king of *Babylon*, and to cause them to dwell again in their own land. His power appears in delivering them, at a time when there seemed to be no relief for them, and by means they could never have expected. His justice he gave proof of in taking vengeance on the *Babylonians*, who had oppressed the *Jews* with so much severity and injustice. Lastly, we are to take notice, that God is true and faithful in his promises, since all that was foretold in this chapter concerning the recovery of the *Jews* came to pass, when they returned from *Babylon* into their own country, under the conduct of *Zorobabel* and their other leaders. But these promises were compleatly fulfilled in the person of *Jesus Christ*, who was born of the posterity of *David*. From all which we may conclude, that God, who is always the same, will protect the Christian church; which, if he appears sometimes angry with, his design is to purify it; and that it shall ever subsist, in spite of the attempts of those who seek its ruin.

CHAP. XXXI.

THIS chapter, as well as the foregoing, treats of the *Jews* restoration. God promises, that after he had chastised them, and they were converted, he would settle them in a happy and glorious condition; and *Ephraim*, that is, the *Israelites* of the ten tribes, should share in this happy revolution. He exhorts them no more to lament their desolation, and gives them strong assurances of his love. Lastly, He promises to make a new covenant with them, which should last always.

REFLECTIONS.

UPON this chapter these three things are to be considered: I. That if the prophets were sent to threaten the *Jews*, they were also sent to comfort them by promises; and that the promises which we have just been reading, must needs tend to strengthen their faith during their captivity in *Babylon*. II: That God promised the *Jews* they should return into their own land, after their repentance and conversion; from whence it appears, that as mens sins are the cause of the afflictions God visits them with, so he restores them not to favour till he sees them penitent and humbled. III. The last and chief reflection is, that God here promises to make a new covenant, which should be as firm as the order of the world, and should last as long as heaven and earth remain. St. *Paul*, in the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, applies this prophecy to the covenant of the Gospel; and it is evident, that the true meaning of it is not to be found in the restoration of the *Jews*, which was but of short continuance, wherein the *Jews* of the ten tribes, very few of them, had any share; so that this promise suits only the Christian church, with which God has made a covenant that is to last until the end of the world. This prophecy sets before us the privilege we enjoy in living under this covenant, teaches us, at the same time, that God's design in admitting us into it was to sanctify us, by putting his law into our hearts, and writing it in our inner parts, that we may serve him and obey him all the days of our life.

CHAP. XXXII.

I. *JEREMIAH* being put in prison at *Jerusalem*, when the *Chaldeans* were besieging that city, God commands him to buy a field, and to put the evidence of the purchase in a place where it might be preserved; whereupon *Jeremiah* asking of the Lord, why he ordered him to buy lands, when the city was to be delivered

vered up to the *Chaldeans*, and the people carried into captivity; God acquainted him, that it was done to be an assurance to the *Jews*, that after they had for the punishment of their sins been sent into captivity to *Babylon*, they should return to their own country, and possess it again.

REFLECTIONS.

THE command that God gave *Jeremiah*, to buy a field, when the *Babylonians* were besieging *Jerusalem*, and he himself was in prison, is very remarkable. This tended to comfort the prophet, and to confirm what he said to the *Jews* concerning their approaching destruction, and their ruin. With this view God ordered the deed of the purchase to be preserved, as a proof and a monument of the truth of *Jeremiah's* predictions. From hence we learn, that nothing is impossible to God; that he infallibly executes his promises, how improbable soever they may appear, humanly speaking. We again find in this chapter, that the inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, though God had greatly blessed them, and bore long with them, corrupted themselves still more and more; that they ceased not to provoke him, which was the reason he gave them up to the power and cruelty of the *Babylonians*; but after he had made the *Jews* suffer the punishment they deserved, he had pity on them. God severely punishes any contempt offered to his goodness, or ungrateful returns for favours received; but he does not wholly withdraw his love from those that have offended him; and when his corrections have produced their effect, he restores them to his favour, and makes the expressions of his love succeed those of his wrath.

CHAP. XXXIII.

THIS prophecy is a sequel of the foregoing: Its contents are, that *Jerusalem* should be taken, its houses destroyed by the *Babylonians*, and its inhabitants

tants put to death; but that afterwards the *Jews* should return from *Babylon*, rebuild the city with glory, and should have divine service performed in the temple as before. God confirms this promise, saying, his covenant with his people should be as firm and immutable as the order of nature.

REFLECTIONS.

FROM the promises made by God to the *Jews*, to bring them again to *Jerusalem*, to dwell there, and to heap his blessings upon them, we are led to consider, that God is always merciful, and inclined to do good to men, and that it is in love he afflicts them; we are also hereby led to take notice of the faithfulness of God, and the firmness of his covenant. It must nevertheless be observed, that the promises here made to the two families of *Israel*, that is, to the *Jews* of the kingdom of *Judah*, and those of the ten tribes, were not entirely fulfilled after the captivity of *Babylon*, since the greatest part of the *Israelites* of the ten tribes remained in the countries where they had been dispersed. The same thing is to be remarked on what God so expressly declares, concerning his worship being for ever established at *Jerusalem*, and his covenant with the house of *David* and with the *Jews*, subsisting as long as the world lasted. This can but imperfectly agree with the restoration of the *Jews* after the captivity, since they did not continue long in *Judea*, and were afterwards destroyed by the *Romans*, and the service performed at *Jerusalem* was quite abolished by the destruction of the temple. These promises therefore relate to the times of the Messiah, and describe the kingdom of *Jesus Christ*, the establishment of the Gospel worship among all nations, and the complete conversion of the *Jews*, which will one day be accomplished. We ought therefore to bless God that these promises have been fulfilled with respect to us, and that we are included in the new covenant, which God had promised to make with all men in the latter days.

CHAP. XXXIV.

WHEN *Nebuchadnezzar* was besieging *Jerusalem*, *Jeremiah* informs *Zedekiah*, that the city should be taken and burnt; that he should not, however, be put to death, but be carried to *Babylon*, and die there. *Zedekiah* and the *Jews*, terrified at the threatenings of *Jeremiah*, shewed some tokens of repentance, and set the *Jewish* slaves at liberty, as the law of God directed them to do every seven years. But soon after, when the *Chaldeans* had retired, and the rulers thought the danger was over, they reduced again to a state of slavery those that had been released; whereupon *Jeremiah* declared to them, that because of their hypocrisy, and the violation of their vow, God would cause the *Chaldeans* to return, who should burn *Jerusalem*, and put its inhabitants to death, and lay the whole country waste.

REFLECTIONS.

THE most important reflection to be made on this chapter, relates to the behaviour of *Zedekiah* and the inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, who finding themselves besieged, set at liberty the *Jewish* servants, and pretended they would observe the law of God; but as soon as the *Chaldeans* retired, because the king of *Egypt* came out against them, the *Jews*, imagining they had nothing more to fear, changed their mind, and made slaves again of their brethren. Thus sinners pretend to humble themselves, and seem disposed for conversion whilst they are threatened, and the danger is near; but as soon as their fears are over, they return to their sins and break their promises. *Jeremiah's* reproaches and threatenings of the *Jews* for their impious and unjust proceedings, shew, that a repentance and a reformation, which is but of short duration, instead of pacifying God, provoked him the more; and that those who violate his covenant, and their own promises, after having vowed to observe them, shall not

not escape the punishments which their hypocrisy and infidelity deserve. Thus it happened to *Zedekiah* and the inhabitants of *Jerusalem*: That city was taken soon after these things; and *Zedekiah* fell into the hands of *Nebuchadnezzar*, who put him in chains, and carried him to *Babylon*, where he died. This is an instance of the just judgment of God upon sinners, and especially on wicked princes.

CHAP. XXXV.

FOR the understanding of this chapter, we must know, that the *Rechabites* were *Jews* descended from *Jonadab*, the son of *Rechab*, who lived in the time of *Jehu*, king of *Israel*, 2 *Kings* x. 15. and upon account of a vow which their father had obliged them to make, drank no wine, and dwelt in tents. These *Rechabites* having fled to *Jerusalem*, when the *Chaldeans* entered *Judea*, under the reign of *Jehoiakim*, as we are told in the twenty-fourth chapter of the Second Book of *Kings*; *Jeremiah* offered them wine, and bade them drink it: which they refused to do, alledging their vow, and the prohibition of their father. Whereupon *Jeremiah* took occasion to reproach the *Jews*, for not shewing the same respect to the commandments of God, as the *Rechabites* shewed to those of their father, and for still persisting in their idolatry. For which reason he denounces destruction to the *Jews*, and promises the *Rechabites* that God would bless them.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS history is worthy of our attention. *Jeremiah* presented wine to the *Rechabites*, not with a design to persuade them to break their vows, but with an intent to make use of their example to condemn the *Jews*. When the *Rechabites* had told him, it was not lawful for them to drink wine, on account of the vow their father had laid upon them, *Jeremiah* took occasion from thence to expostulate with the *Jews*,
and

and expose their great guilt in breaking the divine commands, and the vow they had made to observe them; though these laws related not to things of an indifferent nature, as the use of wine, but to the most necessary and indispensable duties. He reproaches them for the continual exhortations to repentance, which God had given them by his prophets, and which they had refused to hearken to, whilst the *Rechabites* religiously observed the vow laid upon them a long time before. The instruction this furnishes us with, is, that those who do not fulfil the vows they have made to God, nor keep his covenant, must expect the punishments which are denounced against those who shall transgress it; and, on the contrary, that those who observe the duties required, shall be blessed of God, as the *Rechabites* were because of their piety.

CHAP. XXXVI.

I. *JEREMIAH* causes his threatenings against the *Jews* to be writ in a book; and as he could not go himself into the temple, he orders *Baruch* to read them before the people upon a day of fasting. II. *Baruch* having read them in the presence of the people, and of the officers of king *Jehoiakim*, that prince caused the writings to be brought to him; and after he had heard part of it read, he cut it in pieces and threw it in the fire, and ordered *Jeremiah* and *Baruch* to be seized: but God commanded *Jeremiah* to write another book, containing the same things as that which *Jehoiakim* had burnt, and to tell the king, that God would punish him for his impiety; that his judgments should fall upon him and his posterity; and that his body should be deprived of burial.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this history we are to remark, I. That God, on a solemn fast-day, did, by the hand of *Jeremiah* and *Baruch*, warn the *Jews* of the dangers that threatened them,

them, that they might avert them by their repentance. This was a proof of the divine goodness toward that people, who were very near their ruin. Thus does God warn sinners, and afford to them the last means to escape their destruction. II. We here see the extreme impiety of king *Jehoiakim*, who, instead of humbling himself, upon the hearing of those threatenings, cut the book in which they were contained, and threw it into the fire, without regard to the intreaties of some of his officers, who would have prevented him, and commanded *Jeremiah* and *Baruch* to be cast into prison. This behaviour of *Jehoiakim* is a proof of the greatest impiety, and of the utmost contempt of God and his word. Behold how the wicked, instead of being affected by the warnings they receive from God, grow angry at them, and even quarrel with God, his word, and his servants. III. The order that *Jeremiah* received from God, to write in another book the same things that were contained in that which the king had burnt, and to add thereto particular threatenings against him, should lead us to acknowledge, that it is in vain for the wicked to pretend to stop the mouth of God's servants, or to scoff at his word. What God has determined is always executed; and, sooner or later, impious and profane men will bear the punishment due to them; as it happened to king *Jehoiakim*, who perished miserably, and whose carcass was thrown into the draught-house, as *Jeremiah* had foretold in the twenty-second chapter of this Book.

CHAP. XXXVII.

KING *Zedekiah* desired *Jeremiah* to intercede with God for him, and for the *Jews*, at the time when the *Chaldeans* made war against them; but the prophet acquainted him, that although the *Chaldeans* had raised the siege of *Jerusalem*, to go and fight with the king of *Egypt*, who was come to his assistance, yet they should return and take the city. After this,
Jeremiah

Jeremiah going out of *Jerusalem*, was stopped, and accused of designing to go over to the *Chaldeans*; upon which charge he was very much abused, and thrown into a dungeon; but king *Zedekiah* causing him secretly to be brought before him, the prophet foretold to him again, that he should fall into the hands of the king of *Babylon*, and besought him not to send him back to the dungeon, lest he should die there; whereupon the king ordered that he should be put in the court of the prison, and fed there during the siege of *Jerusalem*.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are four observations to be made upon this chapter: I. That wicked men seem sometimes to have recourse to God in danger, but that they do it not sincerely. This we may see in king *Zedekiah*, who, when he was besieged, applied to the prophet for his prayers and counsel; but did not turn from his iniquities, nor follow the advice which the prophet gave him. II. The next consideration relates to what *Jeremiah* declared to the king, telling him, not to depend upon the assistance of the *Egyptians*, nor upon the king of *Babylon's* raising the siege of *Jerusalem*; but that the city should be certainly taken by the *Chaldeans*. From whence we may learn, that it is in vain to trust in the help of man, when God is not on our side, and that nothing can hinder the execution of his purposes. III. We see that *Jeremiah* was unjustly accused by the *Jews*, and was even beaten and thrown into a dungeon, and yet did not forbear telling the king, that he should be subdued by the *Chaldeans*. The ministers of the Lord have been often exposed to persecution and injustice; but the fear of men never stops the mouths of those who are animated with a true zeal. IV. We are here to take notice, that God protected *Jeremiah*, and softened the heart of *Zedekiah* towards him, so that he not only saved him from the dungeon he had been thrown into, but fed him likewise whilst the siege lasted, and the famine prevailed in

in *Jerusalem*. Thus Providence sets bounds to the malice of the wicked, delivers the righteous, and makes good men meet with comfort and help in the worst of times.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

I. **T**HE chief men of *Jerusalem* cause *Jeremiah* to be put in a dungeon full of mire, because he continued to foretel the taking of *Jerusalem*: But an officer named *Ebed-melech*, interceded for him, and took him out of the dungeon. II. *Jeremiah* being secretly brought before the king, still prophesies, that the city should be taken by the *Chaldeans*, and earnestly exhorts *Zedekiah* to surrender himself to them; promising him, that if he did so, he and his household should save their lives, and the city should not be burnt. The king was almost persuaded, but had not courage to follow the advice of the prophet, who was sent back to prison, and remained there till the taking of *Jerusalem*.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter affords us several very instructive lessons. I. The first is, that the servants of God are often persecuted and slandered for discharging their duty. This *Jeremiah* experienced, when he was accused, and imprisoned as a traitor to his king and country, because he advised the *Jews* to submit to the *Chaldeans*. II. The deliverance of *Jeremiah*, who, by *Ebed-melech*, was taken out of the dungeon, in which he must have perished, is a proof of the care God takes of the righteous when persecuted; and the piety of *Ebed-melech*, who had the courage to intercede for *Jeremiah*, shews, that those who fear God, do always what they can in defence of oppressed innocence. We shall see in the following chapter, that the piety of *Ebed-melech* did not go unrewarded. III. The advice *Jeremiah* gave the king, assuring him in the most positive and express manner, that if he sur-

rendered to the *Chaldeans*, no harm should happen to him, and *Jerusalem* should not be burnt; but if he did not, he would expose himself and that city to the greatest miseries, clearly proves that the destruction of that prince, and of *Jerusalem*, was not so determined but he might have prevented it. The divine threatenings and predictions, and the knowledge God has of futurity, do not deprive men of their liberty, since the evils they are threatened with are brought on them by their own fault. Lastly, let us, above all, take notice of the behaviour of *Zedekiah*. That prince had a regard for *Jeremiah*, and even wished to follow his advice; he was moved with what the prophet had told him, and almost determined to do as he advised; but his fear of the rulers of the people prevented him. Thus do sinners act: When God speaks to them, they are sometimes affected; there are still some remains of good in them, which press them to their duty; but they are hindered from following the dictates of their consciences, by a false shame, by the respect they have for men, and by other the like motives, by which means they let slip the favourable opportunity, and after long struggling and resistance, they take the worst side and perish. This was the cause of *Zedekiah's* ruin. The scripture remarks, that he humbled not himself when *Jeremiah* spake unto him in the name of God; and notwithstanding the solicitations of the prophet, and the conviction of his own conscience, resolved not to yield to the *Chaldeans*. The warnings contained in this chapter are the last that God gave him; and as he neglected to improve them, it was afterwards too late to do it, and he drew upon his subjects and himself the utmost miseries, as we find related in the next chapter.

CHAP. XXXIX.

WE have in this chapter, I. An account of the taking of *Jerusalem*, and of king *Zedekiah's* being carried away to *Babylon* with the *Jews*, after that

Nebuchadnezzar had caused his sons to be slain before him, and put out his eyes. II. We see what happened to *Jeremiah*, and the respect which the *Chaldeans* had for him. Lastly, This chapter informs us, that *Ebed-melech*, who had saved the prophet's life, was himself also saved when *Jerusalem* was taken, as *Jeremiah* had promised him.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are three reflections to be made on this chapter: I. That the city of *Jerusalem* was taken, plundered and burnt with the temple; the king's houses, and the houses of the people; and that the *Jews* were carried to *Babylon*, as *Jeremiah* and the other prophets had threatened. So remarkable an event proves that God is righteous, that his threatenings are certain; and that after he has a long while in vain bore with men, he punishes them according to their deserts. II. The next reflection is, that *Zedekiah* was taken; that the king of *Babylon* caused him to be tried as a traitor, and one that had broken the oath of allegiance to him; and that he slew his children before his face, put out his eyes, and carried him in chains to *Babylon*. What befel that prince, who had received so many warnings from God by the prophet *Jeremiah*, shews, that they who refuse to hearken to the voice of God, they who are the authors of other men's sins, and of public miseries, and particularly perjured persons, are made at length examples of the wrath of God. III. It is to be observed, that *Jeremiah* was saved at the taking of *Jerusalem*; and that *Ebed-melech*, who had saved the life of *Jeremiah*, was also himself spared, as God had promised him, because he had put his trust in him. These two are instances of the protection which God vouchsafes to good men in times of calamity. What happened to *Ebed-melech*, shews in particular, that those who protect the innocent, and take upon them to defend the servants of God when they are oppressed, receive the reward of their zeal and piety.

CHAP. XL.

THIS and the following chapters contain the history of what happened to the *Jews*, whom the king of *Babylon* left in *Judea*, after the taking of *Jerusalem*. *Jeremiah* being carried to *Ramah* in chains, with the rest of the captive *Jews*, the captain of the guard to the king of *Babylon* gave *Jeremiah* his choice, either to go to *Babylon*, or stay in the country with the *Jews*; but the prophet preferred staying in *Judea*, and went to *Gedaliah*, whom *Nebuchadnezzar* had appointed governor of that country. *Gedaliah* exhorts the *Jews* to submit themselves to the *Babylonians*, and assures them, they might remain in their land with safety. This governor is warned, that *Ishmael* and the king of the *Ammonites* had entered into a conspiracy against him, but he would not believe it.

REFLECTIONS.

THE remarks we are to make on this chapter are,
 I. That the *Chaldeans* had a particular regard for *Jeremiah* when *Jerusalem* was taken: and that while the *Jews* were in chains, and carried away captives, the prophet was set at liberty. This was a reward of his zeal and integrity, and is a proof of God's care of those that fear him. II. We here see *Jeremiah's* piety, and attachment to his own country and nation. He chose rather to stay in *Judea* with the *Jews* who remained there, than to go to *Babylon*, where he might have shared in the favour and kindness of *Nebuchadnezzar*. Thus should we always prefer our duty, and the edification of our brethren, before all worldly advantages. III. From the account given in this chapter it appears, that the *Jews* might, if they would, have lived securely in their own country, under *Gedaliah*, by submitting themselves to the *Chaldeans*; and even that God sent them that year a plentiful harvest. This was a mark of God's goodness towards that people; and shews, that we ought to submit to, and continue

tinue in that condition which God is pleased to allot us; and that he is always ready to do good to those who submit to the dispensations of his providence. Lastly, The conduct of *Gedaliah* is worthy of our attention. When notice was given him of the conspiracy which *Ishmael*, a prince of the royal family of *Judah*, had formed against him, he would not believe it, nor suffer them to take away his life. In this he acted like an honest man. Good men do not easily give credit to tale-bearers; and as they act with candour, and are incapable of doing an ill action, they do not judge others capable of it, nor ever make use of treachery, or other unlawful means to secure themselves.

CHAP. XLI.

ISHMAEL treacherously kills *Gedaliah*, the governor of *Judea*, and the *Chaldeans* that were with him. The next day he slew threecore and ten *Jews*, who were going to pray and offer their gifts upon the ruins of the temple; and he took prisoners all the *Jews* that were at *Mizpah*, to carry them to the *Ammonites*; but *Johanan* delivered them, and forced *Ishmael* to fly. After which, the *Jews* fearing that the *Chaldeans* would revenge the death of *Gedaliah*, whom *Ishmael* had slain, formed the design of retiring into *Egypt*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE death of *Gedaliah*, and of the *Jews* who were assassinated by *Ishmael* and the other conspirators, is an instance of base and detestable treachery; which shews, that among the *Jews* who remained in *Judea* there were some exceeding wicked. However, it appears from what is here said of the fourscore men, who were going to pray at the ruins of the temple, that there were likewise some pious and zealous persons among the remnant of that nation. What betel them, shews that God permits sometimes the innocent to be

be oppressed, to bring about the wise ends of his providence. However, God did not suffer the traitor *Ishmael*, and his accomplices, to succeed in the design they had formed of making themselves masters of the *Jews*: *Ishmael* did not long enjoy the fruit of his crimes; but God sets bounds to his wickedness, by the means of *Johanan*, who put *Ishmael* to flight, and delivered the people. If God suffers wicked men, in some measure, to succeed in their evil purposes, he likewise puts a stop to them, and does not always suffer them to bring about their unjust schemes.

CHAP. XLII.

THE *Jews* who remained in *Judea* after the taking of *Jerusalem*, consult with *Jeremiah* about the design they had formed of retiring into *Egypt*, and promise with an oath to do as he should direct them. The prophet orders them to stay in the land, and to submit themselves to the *Chaldeans*, promising them security if they did so, and threatening them, that if they went into *Egypt*, they should there perish miserably, and never see their own country again.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter presents us with two reflections: I. That the *Jews* asked counsel of the Lord by *Jeremiah*, whether they should go into *Egypt*, and promised with an oath to obey the commandment of the Lord, which, nevertheless, they did not do. Thus men seem sometimes sincerely to desire to know the will of God, and resolved to obey it, and yet follow their own will, and break their promises. But to consult God is of no use, if we will not do what he commands us. II. God ordered the *Jews* to stay in *Judea*, and promised them that they should be there in peace: whereas, if they went into *Egypt*, thinking to escape the resentment of the *Chaldeans*, and war and famine, the divine vengeance would pursue them there, and they should perish by those very scourges which they thought

to avoid. This was the effect of the great goodness of God, who was willing to preserve them in their own country, and secure them from the miseries that were coming shortly upon the *Egyptians*. God, in his dealings with men, affords them sufficient means of happiness, and forewarns them of the dangers that threaten them. If we follow his directions, we are always secure; but if we reject them, and prefer the maxims of human prudence before the way which God has revealed, we fall inevitably into misery. Lastly, It is to be observed, that notwithstanding all that *Jeremiah* declared to the *Jews*, they were obstinately bent upon going into *Egypt*; and as the prophet reproached them for it, they deceitfully desired him to consult the Lord for them. Strange infidelity and rebellion! The *Jews* think themselves secure in their own country, when the prophets threaten them with divine judgments; and think themselves in the utmost danger, when *Jeremiah* assures them they have nothing to fear. Thus men believe neither God's promises nor threatenings; and by that means stop the current of his mercies towards them, and expose themselves to his severest vengeance.

CHAP. XLIII.

THE *Jews* oppose *Jeremiah*, who commanded them, in God's name, to remain in their own country; and they go into *Egypt*, carrying with them *Jeremiah* and *Baruch*. When the prophet was at *Tahpanhes* in *Egypt*, he foretold that *Nebuchadnezzar* king of *Babylon* should destroy the *Egyptians*, and their idol temples, and the *Jews* who had retired into that country.

REFLECTIONS.

IN the behaviour of the *Jews*, we have an instance of great impiety, joined to the most notorious hypocrisy. They had promised with an oath to follow the advice of the prophet; but because his counsel was
not

not agreeable to their inclinations, they went down into *Egypt*; and even accused the prophet of speaking falsely in the name of the Lord, and desiring to deliver them into the hands of the *Chaldeans*. These *Jews* represent those, who upon some occasions express their zeal and good intentions; but forget their promises, and reject the most wholesome counsels, when they thwart their passions, and what they had secretly proposed; till at length they proceed to open rebellion, and cast off all restraint. However, it is remarkable, that God suffered *Jeremiah* to be carried to *Egypt*, that he might there denounce the ruin of the *Egyptians*, as well as of the *Jews*, who had put their trust in them. Wherever the wicked are, the hand of God finds them out; and those who think to avoid, by disobeying him, the evils they dread, and to that end make use of unlawful means, by those very means fall into the evils they thought to shun, and are confounded in their hope.

CHAP. XLIV.

IN this prophecy, which *Jeremiah* pronounced in *Egypt* against the *Jews* that were fled thither, the prophet reproaches them for continuing in their idolatry and rebellion against God, after all the miseries that had befallen them; and declares, that vengeance should pursue them in the country whither they were fled. But the *Jews* haughtily replied, that they were resolved to sacrifice to idols, and to the queen of heaven, that is, the Moon; which made *Jeremiah* inform them, that God would root them out all, except a small number; and the king of *Egypt* should be delivered into the hands of the king of *Babylon*. This chapter deserves a particular attention.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are several very important reflections to be made upon this chapter: We see, that the *Jews* that were in *Egypt*, were not subdued nor humbled by the desolation

desolation of their country, and so obstinately continued in their sins, that they hearkened not to what *Jeremiah* had spoken to them in the name of the Lord. They even proceed to such excess of rage and impiety, as to tell him, that since they had left off sacrificing to idols, they had met with nothing but misfortunes; that this had brought upon them war and famine; and therefore they were resolved to continue to worship false gods. This is an example of desperate wickedness, and most horrid impiety, especially in a people that knew God, and had lately felt the weight of his judgments for falling into idolatry. But when men have once forsaken God, they grow continually worse and worse, and so hardened, that adversity itself cannot tame them; and therefore God, seeing they are incorrigible, forsakes them utterly. Thus it happened to those unhappy *Jews* who retired into *Egypt*; they were destroyed with the *Egyptians*, by war and famine, as *Jeremiah* and the other prophets had foretold; *Nebuchadnezzar* conquered the king of *Egypt*: and the *Jews*, who thought to find a refuge in that king's dominions, perished there in a miserable manner.

CHAP. XLV.

THE Lord comforts *Baruch*, who lamented for the hardness of the *Jews*; and promises to take care of him, when the city of *Jerusalem* should be taken by the *Chaldeans*. This should be referred to the time preceding the destruction of that city, and to the thirty-sixth chapter of this book.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT is here to be observed is, that the servants of God ought not to abandon themselves to too much sorrow, nor be discouraged, when their ministry is rejected; but always discharge the duties of their calling, in full assurance that God will be their protector.

CHAP. XLVI.

JEREMIAH foretels, that the *Egyptians* should be twice defeated by the *Babylonians*; first at *Carchemish* on the river *Euphrates*, where *Pharaoh Necha* was conquered; and then afterwards in *Egypt* itself, where *Nebuchadnezzar* carried war and desolation, in the time of *Pharaoh Hophrah*. *Jeremiah* also foretels that the *Jews* should return from the captivity. These predictions were made before the destruction of *Jerusalem*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE predictions contained in this chapter were exactly accomplished; *Nebuchadnezzar* having twice defeated the *Egyptians*; once near the river *Euphrates*, in the reign of *Jehoiakim*, king of *Judah*; and the next, when he marched into *Egypt*, and subdued it, and carried the inhabitants into captivity, after he had taken the city of *Tyre*, which happened after the taking of *Jerusalem*. By this means God was pleased to punish the *Egyptians*, and at the same time to chastise those *Jews* who took shelter in that country, contrary to the command of God; since a great number of *Jews* perished in that war. However, it must be observed, the prophet foretels, that after this *Egypt* should be inhabited; and, indeed, the *Egyptians*, did return into their own country, as *Ezekiel* expressly declares. Lastly, We here see, that God comforts the *Jews*, promising to restore them, and destroy the nations who had oppressed them. Thus we see that God, amidst all the changes and revolutions that happen in the world, is ever the preserver and protector of his church.

CHAP. XLVII.

JEREMIAH foretels, that the *Babylonians* should subdue the *Philistines*, *Tyrians*, and *Zidonians*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE *Philistines*, as well as the *Tyrians* and *Zidonians*, were conquered and subdued by *Nebuchadnezzar*; God having determined to punish them for the injuries done to the *Jews*.

CHAP. XLVIII.

JEREMIAH denounces the woes that were to fall on the *Moabites*. He foretels that *Nebo*, *Kirjath-hain*, and *Heshbon*, and other cities here mentioned, should be destroyed, and they carried into captivity; but that they should be restored.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter contains a very particular detail of the calamities that were to come upon the *Moabites* in all their cities, and throughout their whole country; which is exactly conformable to what the prophet *Isaiah* had foretold before, as we read in the 15th and 16th chapters of his prophecy. All this was fulfilled soon after the taking of *Jerusalem*, when the *Chaldeans* came and ravaged that country. We learn from this chapter, that their idolatry, their insufferable pride, and the insults they had offered to the *Jews*, drew upon them the severe effects of the divine vengeance.

CHAP. XLIX.

THE prophet denounces the judgments of God against the *Ammonites*, the *Edomites*, the *Syrians*, the *Arabians*, and the *Elamites*.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we see, that when *Jerusalem* was assaulted and taken by the *Chaldeans*, and the *Jews* carried into captivity, God poured out his judgments upon the nations here mentioned. God treated them
thus,

thus, because they had very much injured his people; and to convince those idolatrous nations, that the God whom the *Jews* worshipped was the only true God, and the supreme Lord of all things. And that it might be past doubt he was the dispenser of all these events, he was pleased his prophets should foretel them beforehand, and commit their predictions to writing; and the exact completion of these prophecies prove the divine authority of them.

CHAP. L.

THIS chapter declares, that the idols of *Babylon*, whose names were *Bel* and *Merodach*, should be destroyed; and that the *Babylonians* should be destroyed by the *Medes* and *Persians*, after they had oppressed the *Jews* and other nations mentioned in the foregoing chapters; and that then the *Jews* would be set at liberty, and return into their own country.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS prophecy foretels two considerable events; the destruction of the *Babylonians*, and the deliverance of the *Jews*. As to the first of these events, it is to be observed, that after God had chastised the *Jews*, the *Egyptians*, and other nations, whose ruin *Jeremiah* had foretold, by means of the king of *Babylon*; the *Babylonians* themselves were punished in their turn, and fell under the dominion of the *Medes* and *Persians*. God thought fit it should happen, as *Jeremiah* foretold it would, to prove that the gods of the *Babylonians* were but false gods, to confound their pride, and to punish them for their injustice and tyranny, and particularly for reviling the true God, destroying his temple abolishing his worship, and oppressing his people. The other event taken notice of in this prophecy, is the deliverance of the *Jews*, which happened at the same time; they being set at liberty by *Cyrus* king of *Persia*, after he had taken *Babylon*, and were afterwards protected by the successors of that prince.

prince. In the completion of these two predictions of *Jeremiah*, let us acknowledge the truth and divinity of these prophecies, and at the same time the power of God, his justice and love to his people. Lastly, God revealed these things to *Jeremiah*, and would have the *Jews* informed of them, in order to support and comfort them when they were going to fall into the hands of the *Chaldeans*.

CHAP. LI.

THE prophet continues to foretel the destruction of *Babylon*, and the *Babylonish* empire. He says, that after God has chastised several nations, and especially the *Jews*, by means of the king of *Babylon*, that city should be taken; that the *Babylonish* monarchy should be destroyed; and that then the captive *Jews* should be set at liberty, and return to *Jerusalem* with joy. This prophecy *Jeremiah* gave in writing to *Seraiah*, one of *Zedekiah*'s principal officers, who was going to *Babylon* with a message from the king his master; he ordered him to read it as soon as he arrived there, and when he had done reading it, to fasten it to a stone, and throw it into the river *Euphrates*: thereby to express the certainty of the destruction of that city.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS very remarkable prophecy, which was fulfilled threescore years after it was first made, is an exact prediction of the taking of *Babylon*, and of the several circumstances attending that memorable event. *Jeremiah* says, that great city would be taken by the *Medes* and *Persians* after a long siege; that though the inhabitants of *Babylon* thought themselves secure in the strength of their city, and the advantage of their situation, since it was surrounded by the waters of the river *Euphrates*; yet the enemies should enter in, after they had turned the course of that river, and dried up the other waters that were about the city.

He

He adds, that the king of *Babylon* should not hear the news, till the enemies had entered the city at one end; and that this should come upon him, when he was in the height of joy, and feasting with the nobles of his kingdom. He says, that the high and lofty walls of that city should be broken down, and no remains be left of its former grandeur. All this perfectly agrees with what *Daniel* and other historians inform us concerning the taking of that great city, and the end of the *Babylonish* empire. When *Jeremiah* and the other prophets foretold these things, the *Babylonians* were at the height of their power and glory; they carried their conquests on every side, and made all submit to their dominion; they were even then upon the very point of destroying the *Jews*, and laying *Jerusalem* waste; and yet the prophets declared that the *Babylonians* themselves should be made desolate, and their city taken, burnt, and utterly overthrown, by princes who should set the *Jews* at liberty, and cause *Jerusalem* to be rebuilt. There is such a character of majesty in all this, as evidently proves the divine original of these prophecies. God thought fit these predictions should be read in *Babylon*, for the consolation of the *Jews* that were already there, and of those that were in a few years to be carried thither; and to teach them that this revolution, so fatal to the *Babylonians*, would be very advantageous to the *Jewish* nation, which would then be set at liberty.

CHAP. LII.

THIS is an account of the destruction of *Jerusalem*, which, after a long siege, was taken by the king of *Babylon*. The city and temple were burnt; and *Zedekiah* and the princes of *Jerusalem* taken and carried to *Babylon* with the people. The same history we read in the 25th chapter of the Second Book of *Kings*. With this history ends the Book of the Prophet *Jeremiah*.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS history offers to our consideration one of the most remarkable events that ever happened, which is the taking of *Jerusalem* by the *Chaldeans*. This city, after it had held out a long siege, and endured a severe famine, was taken by assault, burnt, and utterly destroyed. The temple itself was involved in this general destruction; and God, who had put his name there, and set that place apart for his worship, permitted the *Babylonians* to profane and burn it, after they had stript it of every thing that was most valuable; so that holy place remained desolate, and the divine service entirely ceased to be performed in it. By which God revenged on the *Jews*, the profanation of the temple, and shewed likewise, that the service which had been there established was not always to subsist. King *Zedekiah* was put in chains and carried to *Babylon*, having his own eyes put out, after he had seen his sons slain in his presence. This was a judgment of God upon that king, who, by his perjury and rebellion against the king of *Babylon*, and by his obstinacy, had brought all these miseries upon his dominions. The priests and the rulers were also put to death, as the prophet had threatened them, and as they deserved, since, instead of faithfully discharging their duty, they had seduced the people into all manner of wickedness. Lastly, The people were not spared; almost all the *Jews* perished by the famine or by the sword; and of those who escaped the rage of the *Babylonians*, some were carried into captivity, and others remained in *Judea*, in a very low and wretched condition. Thus God accomplished the many threatenings he had denounced against the *Jews* by his prophets, and shewed, that those who persist in offending him, become at length examples of his justice; and that even his covenant does not secure them from his judgments. However, it is worth notice, that the king of *Babylon* treated *Jehoiakim*, king of *Judah*, very kindly, who
had

had been captive for a long time in that city: This was an instance of the goodness of God towards the captive *Jews*, and a preparing the way for their return into their own country, which came to pass, after the seventy years of their captivity were elapsed.

The end of the Book of the Prophet JEREMIAH.

THE
LAMENTATIONS
OF
J E R E M I A H.

ARGUMENT.

This book contains the lamentations and complaints which the prophet Jeremiah pronounced upon the desolation of Jerusalem, when that city was taken by the Chaldeans, and together with the temple burnt and destroyed, and the Jews carried away captives to Babylon.

CHAP. I.

I. THE prophet complains that *Jerusalem*, which was once in so flourishing a condition, was laid waste, the people carried into captivity, and the divine service abolished. II. He confesses, that all these miseries happened to the *Jews* because of their rebellion against God. III. He beseeches him to have compassion on them, and to restrain the malice of their enemies.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

I. THE destruction of *Jerusalem* affords us a woeful instance of divine justice. The severity of this justice appears, not only in the city's being taken, and the

people exposed to the fury of their enemies, and carried into captivity ; but more especially in the burning of the temple, and the suppression of the divine service. After such an example as this, no one can doubt but God will severely revenge the contempt men offer to his covenant, his worship, and the invitations of his mercy. II. As *Jeremiah* lamented and bewailed this desolation, so all those who love God are most sensibly afflicted, when they see men provoke God by their sins, and his church exposed to sufferings. And as the prophet owns, that all the calamities that befall the *Jews* were the just punishment of their sins ; we ought likewise to adore the righteousness of God, in all the evils that happen to us, and receive them as chastisements which we have brought upon ourselves. Lastly, In imitation of *Jeremiah*, we must zealously implore God's mercy, when he is provoked against us ; and above all, pray fervently for the peace and deliverance of the church.

CHAP. II.

JEREMIAH continues to bewail the desolation of *Jerusalem*, of the temple, of *Judea*, and of the whole *Jewish* nation. He gives a most affecting description of their miseries, and implores God's mercy.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter engages us to make three reflections: I. The first relates to the miseries that befall the *Jews* in the loss of all their privileges, and of the divine protection ; in the destruction of their city and temple ; and in the evils they endured, through war, famine and captivity. In all these melancholy events, *Jeremiah* acknowledges the just judgment of God on that people, who had abused the favours he had conferred on them with so bountiful a hand. This the prophet had threatened the *Jews* with ; and these things *Moses* had foretold would befall them. II. It is to be observed, that though the *Babylonians* had reduced the
Jews

Jews to that deplorable condition they were then in, yet the prophet attributes all these misfortunes to God; and says it was God himself who had cast off his people, and delivered his temple, his alars, and his city, into the hands of the idolators. The enemies of the *Jews* could not have hurt them, if God had not withdrawn his protection from the people which he had chosen. God is the dispenser of afflictions to mankind; but in his church, particularly, nothing happens without his will. Lastly, We should consider, that when God thus exposes his church to sufferings, he does not design to destroy it, but only to reform and purify it by his corrections. We should pass the same judgment on all the evils that befall men in this life.

CHAP. III.

IN this chapter, which has three parts, I. *Jeremiah* represents, by several figures, the deplorable state of the *Jews*. II. He comforts himself, and acknowledges the love of God in punishing his people, and takes occasion to shew, that afflictions are necessary to men; that God, in strict justice, dispenses good and evil; and he exhorts the *Jews* to confess their sins, and be converted. Lastly, He resumes his description of the miserable state of the *Jews*, implores the assistance of God in their behalf, and foretels the destruction of the *Babylonians*, and their other enemies.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter is very proper for the instruction and comfort of persons in affliction. In it we learn, I. That God exposes men to various evils; that he punishes them sometimes with great severity, and reduces them to such a condition, that he seems to have quite forsaken them, and left them without hope of remedy. II. *Jeremiah* teaches us, that God does not willingly afflict them, but does it with justice, and even with mercy; and that when he chastises men,

he does not cast them off utterly, but only proposes to bring them back to himself. *Jeremiah* tells us hereupon, that afflictions are very useful and necessary for us; that it is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth; that it is by sufferings we learn to seek God; and that then too it is that God draws nigh to us, since he is always gracious to those who hope in him, and to the soul that seeketh him. III. The prophet teaches us again, that good and evil proceed from the commands of the Most High; and that nothing is done here below, but by his will. He instructs us in the duty of persons in affliction, saying, that *man* ought not to *complain for the punishment of his sins*; but he ought to *search and try his ways*, and *lift up his heart and hands to God*, confessing and forsaking his sins. Lastly, *Jeremiah* assures us, that God is appeased towards those who humble themselves thus under affliction, and improve under his rod. This doctrine should be well understood and remembered, to be used at all times, particularly in the time of adversity.

CHAP. IV.

IN this chapter, which consists of three parts, I. *Jeremiah* describes the terrible judgments of God upon the *Jews*, and compares the happy state they were in before their ruin, with the deplorable condition they were then in. II. He says, that their rebellion, and chiefly the sins of the priests and the prophets, had brought all these miseries upon them. III. He prophesies, that God would deliver his people, and denounces the divine wrath against their enemies, and particularly against the *Edomites*.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to consider in this chapter, I. The great change that happened in the condition of the *Jews*, who from a prosperous state were reduced to the greatest misery, being deprived of all the advantages they

they enjoyed, and overwhelmed with all imaginable evils; for God poured out upon them all the fierceness of his wrath. Thus we see, how those who have been the most favoured of God, feel his severest vengeance when they abuse his mercies. II. *Jeremiah* says, that all these miseries came upon the *Jews* for their sins, and particularly for the sins of the prophets, and the iniquities of their priests. These remarkable words shew, that one thing which most provokes the wrath of God, is the impiety of persons of a publick character, and especially of the ministers of religion, because their depravity is commonly followed by the corruption of the people. III. The threatenings here denounced by the prophet against the *Edomites*, were occasioned by their rejoicing at the ruin of the *Jews*, and even contributing towards it. From whence it appears, that if those whom God loves are not spared, the wicked and ungodly have no reason to flatter themselves they shall escape unpunished.

CHAP. V.

THIS chapter is a prayer, in which *Jeremiah* intreats the Lord to have compassion upon *Jerusalem* and the *Jews*; he represents the greatness of their desolation, confesses that they were justly punished for the sins of their fathers, and earnestly begs of God to restore *Jerusalem* and his people to their former state.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE fervent zeal with which the prophet beseeches the Lord to have compassion on his people, should excite us at all times to pray earnestly for the prosperity of the church, and the supply of all its wants, whether it be exposed to sufferings, or vice and impiety make cruel havock in it. II. These words of the prophet should be taken particular notice of; *Our fathers have sinned, and are not; and we have borne*

borne their iniquities. We must not imagine, that God, who is just and good, punishes children, so as to exclude them from his mercy, for the sins which their fathers have committed; but it often happens, that God, to chastise the fathers, and for the good of the children themselves, exposes them in this life to the calamities which their fathers, by their sins, have brought upon them. This the captive *Jews* at *Babylon* experienced; and this God had threatened them with, when he says in the law, that *he would punish the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation*; as we daily see it happens in the course of his providence. Lastly, The humble and earnest prayer which *Jeremiah* made to God to restore the *Jewish* nation, shews, that when God corrects us, and uses us with the greatest severity, we should have recourse to him by a serious repentance, and implore his mercy; which is the only way to procure a renewal of his favours.

The end of the Book of LAMENTATIONS.

THE
BOOK
OF THE PROPHET
EZEKIEL.

ARGUMENT.

Ezekiel prophesied in Chaldea, where he was with the Jews who had been carried thither with king Jehoiakim, about eleven years before the destruction of Jerusalem. He prophesied from the fifth year of the captivity, for the space of about twenty years; while Jeremiah at Jerusalem was foretelling the same things. Ezekiel was sent by God to instruct and exhort the Jews that were in Chaldea, and to foretel the desolation that was to come upon the Jews who were still in Judea, the taking of Jerusalem, the ruin of several nations, the deliverance of the captive Jews, the coming of the Messiah, the calling of the Gentiles, and the establishment of the kingdom of God.

CHAP. I.

EZEKIEL relates, I. The time and place where God called him. II. A vision which he saw.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

THERE are two things that here require our attention, namely, the calling of *Ezekiel*, and the vision he received from God. I. The calling of the prophet, and the command he received from God to declare the things contained in this Book, engage us to hearken to it with attention and respect. II. The magnificent vision of the four living creatures, and of the four wheels, which *Ezekiel* saw, was a representation of God's glory, which tended to convince the prophet, that God had appeared unto him. It signified likewise that God is every where present; that his knowledge and power are infinite; that he governs all things by his providence; and as it was by his will *Jerusalem* was destroyed, so he would change its condition, and bring the *Jews* again from their captivity, in a way known only to himself.

CHAP. II.

- I. GOD commands *Ezekiel* to speak to the *Jews*, and to reproach them for their ingratitude.
 II. He shews him a roll, or a book filled with curses.

REFLECTIONS.

THE order *Ezekiel* received from God to speak to the *Jews*, and to tell them boldly and without fear all that he should command him to declare unto them, shews, that those who are sent by God ought to discharge their commission with zeal, without fearing the malice of men; and always to declare the will of the Lord, *whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear*. It appears likewise from hence, that those who are warned, are inexcusable if they neglect to improve by it. The vision of that Book, which was filled with lamentations and woes, signified, that the curses which God had denounced against the *Jews* by *Moses* and the prophets, were going to fall heavy upon them;

them; and that they would soon be reduced to the most deplorable condition.

CHAP. III.

I. **G**OD orders *Ezekiel* to eat a roll, or a book; which signified, that he was to hearken to the word of the Lord, and write it in his own heart; that he should execute the command he received, to speak to the *Jews* in *Chaldea*, and not to fear them, though they should be obstinate in their sins; This vision, which the prophet had already seen, was repeated.

II. *Ezekiel* goes to the *Jews* that were at *Telabib*, where God instructs him again in the duties of his office, confirms him in his calling by a vision which he had before shewn him; and warns him again of the obstinacy and perverseness of the *Jews*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. **T**HE first thing to be observed on this chapter is, that God tells the prophet, he sent him not to strange nations, but to the *Jews*; and that nevertheless they would not hear him. God is so kind as to prevent men by his grace, and make himself known to them; but they who ought to be most attentive to his voice, and have received the greatest favours from him, are often the most hardened in iniquity. II. It is to be considered, that although God knew the obstinacy of the *Jews*, he was pleased nevertheless to send *Ezekiel* to exhort them: by which we see, on one hand, that God warns even those who are most corrupt; and that if they do not make a right use of it, he will punish them with justice; and, on the other hand, that the prospect, or fear of ill success, should not prevent the ministers of the Lord from discharging their duty. III. The promises God made *Ezekiel* to assist him, ought to fill with confidence all those who walk faithfully in the duties of their calling. IV. Let us above all observe, that when God a second time caused *Ezekiel* to behold his glory, he

most

most expressly charged him to warn the *Jews* from him; telling him, that he appointed him as a watchman over them; that if he warned not the wicked, and even the righteous, who had turned away from their righteousness, they should die in their sins, but that he should be accountable for their loss; whereas if he faithfully warned them, he should deliver his own soul. This shews with what zeal those who watch over the souls of men, and are to give an account, ought to discharge their ministry, and to warn sinners, and even good men, if they would not be responsible before God for their souls, should they perish through their fault. This teaches us likewise, that those who are warned, and do not beware, are without excuse.

CHAP. IV.

IN this chapter we have a figurative and prophetic description of the siege of *Jerusalem*, and of the famine that would be in that city during the siege.

REFLECTIONS.

On this chapter let it be remarked, that God formerly represented, by visions and sensible images, what he thought fit to reveal to the prophets; and that they likewise used to represent, by the same images and extraordinary actions, what was to come to pass. The 390 days, in which *Ezekiel* lay on his left side, signified, that *Jerusalem* should be besieged so many days; and these 390 days answered to the 390 years which passed between the time that idolatry was introduced by *Jeroboam*, and the taking of *Jerusalem*. The forty days that the prophet lay on his right side, denoted, that from the taking of that city, till the *Chaldeans* had made an end of burning and plundering it, would be so many days; and the like number of years passed after God had declared, in the reign of *Josiah*, that the destruction of that city was irreversibly determined. The mean and uncommon food of the prophet, all that time, signified the great famine

mine that would be in *Jerusalem* during the siege. The Lord was pleased thus to reveal beforehand to *Ezekiel*, what was shortly to happen to the inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, that the *Jews*, especially those who were in *Chaldea*, might not doubt of the execution of the threatenings which God had denounced against their countrymen.

CHAP. V.

GOD commands *Ezekiel* to shave his head and beard, to burn one part of the hair, to cut another part with a sword, to cast another part to the wind, and to shut up the rest. This was another of the mysterious actions of the prophet, which was to signify, that the *Jews* who were at *Jerusalem* should be destroyed, some by pestilence and famine, some by war; that others should be dispersed throughout the world, and that a small number of them should be preserved.

REFLECTIONS.

WE have, in this chapter, a very express type of the evils that befel the *Jews*, when the *Chaldeans* besieged and took *Jerusalem*. Great numbers of them perished by the pestilence; many were carried off by famine during this siege; others were slain by the enemies; and those who escaped these misfortunes were dispersed and sent into captivity. II. The prophet, when he proposed this emblem of the *Jews* destruction, declared that the *Jews* should be overtaken with these plagues, because they had rejected God's ordinances, and profaned his sanctuary; and especially, because they had imitated, and even exceeded the neighbouring nations in their idolatry. He tells them, that for this reason God would punish them in the sight of those nations; and that as they had exceeded the other nations in wickedness, he would do such things to them as he had never done before, and would execute his judgments upon them with wrath and

and fury. Thus God punishes men for their rebellion, suiting their punishment to their crimes, and treating those with the greatest severity, who have had the greatest share in his favours, when they ungratefully abuse them.

CHAP. VI.

IN this chapter, which is a continuation of the prophecy in the foregoing, *Ezekiel* prophesies against *Judea*, and foretels, I. That the cities and places where the *Jews* had committed their idolatries should be destroyed, and they should perish by war, famine and pestilence. II. That there should be a remnant of them preserved and restored, after they had been captives in strange countries.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are three things to be considered in this chapter, I. That the inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, and of all *Judea*, felt those miseries which *Ezekiel* had denounced against them, as we learn from the account of what happened during the siege, and at the taking of that city. God thought fit these things should be foretold beforehand, that, as it is observed in this chapter, the *Jews*, when they came to pass, might confess, that the word of the Lord had not been spoken in vain, and might be encouraged to turn to him. II. Since God thus dealt with the *Jews*, to punish their sins, and especially their idolatry, we may from hence learn, that he particularly abhors idolatry; and that he severely revenges the infidelity of those who know him, and, notwithstanding that, despise his laws, and profane his worship. III. Amidst these threatenings of the prophet, and all these expressions of God's wrath, we see evident tokens of his goodness, promising to spare the remnant of the *Jews*, and to restore those that should remember him and be converted; which is an assurance to us, that those whom God is most provoked with, may still become the objects of his love,

love, if they acknowledge and bewail their sins, and make a right use of his chastisements.

CHAP. VII.

EZEKIEL continues to describe the ruin of the *Jews*: He declares that the end, that is, the time of their desolation was come: that God would spare them no longer, and that he would shortly take vengeance of their idolatry and other sins, causing them to perish by the sword, by pestilence, and by famine; driving them out of their own country, sending them into captivity, and giving their land to strangers.

REFLECTIONS.

THESE repeated threatenings of *Ezekiel* against the *Jews* that were still at *Jerusalem*, which were all accomplished, should serve for a warning and example, to teach us, that after God has a long time borne with sinners, he will at last infallibly execute his threatenings. The certainty and severity of God's judgments appear in his express and positive declaration, that he would no longer spare the *Jews*, nor take pity on them. We must not think to rely upon the mercy of God, while we remain in a state of impenitency; since there is a time when the goodness and patience of the Lord are at an end. There is another thing to be taken notice of on this subject, which is, that the prophet here declares, that neither the riches of the *Jews*, nor any other advantages, could save them from the shame and desolation that threatened them: from whence we may gather, that nothing can screen men from the wrath of God when they persist in their sins.

CHAP. VIII.

GOD carries *Ezekiel* to *Jerusalem* in a vision, and there shews him the many abominations committed by the *Jews*, in worshiping all sorts of idols; and he protests he will pour upon them all his wrath.

REFLECTIONS.

THE subject of this chapter is well worthy our attention. We see here, that the *Jews* at *Jerusalem*, a little before their destruction, had given themselves up to the greatest abominations. They worshipped the sun, and the images of all kinds of beasts; their women paid an abominable worship to the idols of the *Egyptians*; and to complete their impiety, they committed this execrable idolatry, not only in their houses, but even in the temple itself. These horrid crimes prove, that they had carried their impieties to the highest pitch, and that no good was to be expected from them. Farther, we may observe, that God revealed all these abominations of the *Jews* in a vision to *Ezekiel*, to convince him, and the *Jews* that were with him in *Chaldea*, that the destruction of *Jerusalem* was inevitable and truly just. This shews likewise that God knows all things, that men cannot hide the knowledge of their sins from him, though they should commit them in the dark, and never so secretly, and therefore cannot escape his judgment.

CHAP. IX.

IN this chapter, which is a continuation of the vision mentioned in the foregoing, God, after he had shewed *Ezekiel* the abominations and idolatries of the inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, commands the ministers of his vengeance to destroy them; but to spare the good men that were still among them, setting a mark on their foreheads. And as the prophet took occasion to ask God, whether he would utterly destroy the *Jews*; he answered, that he would spare them no longer.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter engages us to make these three reflections. I. We are carefully to consider the command which God gave to the ministers of his wrath,

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to slay and root out old and young, women and children: This the *Chaldeans* executed when they took *Jerusalem*; the inhabitants of that city perished in a miserable manner, by famine, by fire and sword, the enemies being regardless of every age, sex or condition.

This is a terrible instance of the wrath of God, which ought to inspire us with a dread of his judgments.

II. We should seriously reflect upon the order which God gave his angel, to mark and spare all such as grieved and sighed because of the abominations that were committed in *Jerusalem*. These words represent the character of good men, and of God's elect, who afflict themselves at the sight of other mens sins. We may also observe here, how dear to God zealous and pious persons are; what care he takes of them, and how he spares them when he punishes the ungodly. The same promises are made in Holy Scripture to all God's faithful servants, and to those who shall keep themselves undefiled in the midst of the corruptions of the world. Lastly, it is to be well considered, that when *Ezekiel* enquired of God, whether he would destroy his people, God answered, that the sins of the *Jews* were too great not to be avenged; that they had carried their impiety so far as to say, *The Lord hath forsaken the land, and the Lord seeth not*; and therefore that he would have no pity on them. When men have arrived to a certain degree of wickedness; when they have lost all fear of God, and every thing is in the utmost disorder, God is, as it were, obliged to execute justice, and his mercy gives place to his vengeance.

CHAP. X.

THIS chapter continues the vision related in the two former chapters. *Ezekiel* saw an appearance, like that which he had already seen, which is described in the beginning of this Book; but this last appearance was attended with two particular circumstances; one was, that the prophet saw an angel scattering burning coals over the city of *Jerusalem*; and the other, that he

he saw the glory of God depart from the temple and from the city.

REFLECTIONS.

GOD was pleased the vision, which *Ezekiel* had seen at the beginning of his ministry, should be repeated, to confirm his predictions, and to shew still more expressly that *Jerusalem* would shortly be burnt and destroyed, and the temple deprived of God's presence and protection. The coals of fire which the angel scattered over the city, signified, that it should be burnt by the *Chaldeans*. It is said, that the angel took these coals from between the cherubims, by the command of God, to shew that this destruction proceeded from the Lord. The prophet saw particularly the glory of the Lord go up from the cherubims, and light upon the door of the sanctuary, and from thence upon the door of the court; which shewed, that God was going to withdraw himself from that place. This is the general design or meaning of this vision; which is a lively representation of the severe vengeance which God was going very shortly to take of the *Jews*, for the sins committed in *Jerusalem*, and their profaning the temple and the service of God.

CHAP. XI.

THIS chapter is a continuation of the former, in which *Ezekiel* finishes his account of the vision he had seen. I. God informs him, that the inhabitants of *Jerusalem* would soon experience his most severe judgments, though they thought they had nothing to fear; of which the sudden death of *Petaliah*, one of the princes of the people, was a sign. II. The prophet declares, that though the *Jews* who were as *Jerusalem*, thought they should dwell in their own country, rather than those who were already captives at *Babylon*; yet that these should be recalled, and that God would bless all among them that should truly turn to him. III. After this, the prophet saw the glory of the Lord, which

which had rested upon the door of the court of the temple, withdraw entirely from the city; which signified that it would soon be forsaken by God. This vision being ended, the prophet told the vision to the *Jews* in *Chaldea*.

REFLECTIONS.

WE find by this chapter, that there were at *Jerusalem*, just before the destruction of that city, very many, even among the chief men, who scoffed at the threatenings of the prophet, and gave the people pernicious counsel. This spirit of infidelity and irreligion is always a forerunner of the divine vengeance, especially when those who are in authority are infected. This God testified, when he declared, that he knew all the thoughts of those rebellious and unbelieving *Jews*; and that he would cause the sword to come upon them. From thence we likewise learn, that God knows distinctly all the actions, and all the thoughts of men, and that he judges them all according to their works. The similitude of a caldron, or pot in which flesh is boiled, signified, that part of the inhabitants of *Jerusalem* should perish in that city, and that the rest should be taken from thence, and put to death in the land of *Israel*, and in other places, by their enemies. The promises which God adds to these threatenings, in behalf of the *Jews* that were captives in *Chaldea*, declaring he would bring them again into the land of *Israel*, shew, that God is merciful and gracious, even when he is displaying his severest judgments; but they prove at the same time, that he exercises his goodness only towards such sinners as have a new heart and a new spirit, and fear his name; and that to those who follow their own irregular affections, he renders according to their deserts. Lastly, we here see, that the glory of the Lord, which had withdrawn from the sanctuary, afterwards from the temple, and at length forsook the city entirely, implied, that God was going utterly to forsake *Jerusalem* and its inhabitants.

CHAP. XII.

I. **G**OD commands the prophet to go out of his house at the beginning of the night with his face covered; which was to shew, that *Zedekiah* the king should fly from *Jerusalem* by night; that he should be taken by the *Chaldeans*, and be carried to *Babylon*; that he should die in that city, but should not see it, because his eyes would be put out. II. The prophet likewise foretels the destruction and captivity of the people of *Jerusalem*. Lastly, he declares, by order of God, that the threatenings of the Lord's prophets were shortly to be put in execution, though the *Jews* imagined they would not be fulfilled of a long time.

REFLECTIONS.

I. **WE** meet in this chapter with a very clear representation of all that was shortly to happen to king *Zedekiah* and the *Jews*, when *Jerusalem* should be taken by the *Chaldeans*; namely, that that prince should fall into the hand of his enemies; that he should attempt to fly by night from *Jerusalem*; that he should be taken, and have his eyes put out; that he should go to *Babylon*, but not see it; that the princes of *Jerusalem* should be slain; and that the people should be carried into captivity. This prediction, which was literally and in every circumstance fulfilled, proves very clearly, that God has a perfect knowledge of futurity, and that all things are directed by his providence. God gave the *Jews* in *Chaldea* notice of all this, that they might not envy the condition of their brethren who were still in *Jerusalem*. II. It is to be observed, that God here declares, he was resolved to disperse the *Jews* among the nations, that the abominations and the sins with which they had provoked him to wrath might be known among them. This shews, that God dispenses his corrections with justice; and that the end which he proposes in chastising men, is to bring them to a confession of their sins, and to repentance,

and at the same time to make them serve for an example to others. III. Another thing this chapter teaches us is, that the *Jews*, though they were extremely guilty, and upon the point of perishing, lived in profound security; that they did not apprehend the threatenings of the prophets, or at least believed it would be a long while before the threatenings would be accomplished; which security of theirs made them impatient, and occasioned their utter destruction. It is a dangerous thing to flatter ourselves when God threatens us, and to defer our conversion when he sends us warning of our danger; but a salutary dread, attended with a speedy conversion, is the sure and only way to prevent his judgments.

CHAP. XIII.

EZEKIEL denounces the judgments of God against those prophets and prophetesses who falsely pretended to divine inspiration, and promised peace to the people of *Israel*, at a time when there was no peace for them, and they were going to be destroyed; and he threatens also such as should hearken to these false prophets, with the same miseries.

REFLECTIONS.

THE destruction of *Jerusalem* fully verified all that *Ezekiel* had said in this chapter, and the event shewed, that those prophets who desired to persuade the people that no harm would happen to them, were impostors, and that *Ezekiel* was really sent to them from God. From hence we are to learn two things: I. That the ministers of the Lord commit a very great sin, and expose themselves to a dreadful condemnation, when, instead of boldly reproving impenitent sinners, and threatening them with the anger of God, they soothe them in their crimes, and fill them with a false confidence. The prophet expresses the sin of these false teachers, saying, that they seduced the people, promising them *peace when there was no peace; that they daubed the wall*

with untempered mortar; and that they sewed pillows to all armholes. This should be a powerful engagement to all those who are called to the sacred ministry, to discharge the will of God faithfully, lest if they flatter sinners with vain and groundless promises, they expose themselves likewise to the divine vengeance. II. Since God threatens the people with his judgments, for hearkening to false prophets, it is evident, that those who suffer themselves to be deceived, shall likewise bear the punishment of their iniquities; especially if they have, as the *Jews* had, means to be instructed in the will of God and their duty. It follows likewise from hence, that as we ought to shun false teachers and seducers, so ought we to love and hearken to those who with zeal and sincerity discharge their duty.

CHAP. XIV.

I. **THIS** chapter contains complaints and threatenings against the hypocritical *Jews*, who made as if they desired to learn the will of God, and to consult his prophets, whilst they worshipped idols, and hearkened to false prophets rather than to the true servants of God. *Ezekiel* tells them, the Lord was going to display his most severe vengeance on the seducers, and them that hearkened to them. II. God declares, that when he should resolve to punish a country by any of his plagues, the good in that country might be preserved, but could not save others; by which God meant to shew, that the ruin of the *Jews* was inevitable; that he had resolved to display all his sore judgments at once upon them; and that the small number of good men that remained among them should not secure them.

REFLECTIONS.

I. IT appears from this chapter, that it is gross impiety and hypocrisy to pretend to inquire of the Lord, and to attend to his word, while our heart is far from him, and we are resolved to persevere in our sins.

II. That

II. That when God has sufficiently made known his will to men, and they, notwithstanding, err from the right way, obstinately following their own wills and imaginations, he in his just judgment forsakes them; and then meeting with seducers they give ear to lies rather than the truth. Thus it happened to the *Jews*; instead of following the wholesome counsels God had given them by his prophets, they adhered to impostors, and perished with them when *Jerusalem* was taken, as *Ezekiel* had threatened them. It is a dangerous thing to hearken to any other voice than that of God; who will justly punish both those who seduce others, and those who suffer themselves to be seduced. There are several important instructions to be drawn from the second part of this chapter. We here learn, that the sword, famine, pestilence, and other the like calamities, are the punishments which God makes use of against countries and nations. But above all, let us seriously consider what is here said of *Noah*, *Daniel*, and *Job*, those holy men, so acceptable in the sight of God, that if they were among a people whom God had determined to destroy, they could not prevent their destruction. The intercession of good men prevaieth much, but is not always effectual for others; however, God takes care of his own elect, and exempts them, from those punishments and miseries to which the wicked and sinners are exposed. It appears from this chapter, that *Daniel* was already become illustrious for his piety, among those who were carried captives to *Babylon* with king *Jehoiakim*. See *Dan.* i. 1—6.

CHAP. XV.

GOD represents the total destruction of the *Jews*, by the similitude of a vine branch, which is fit for nothing but to be burnt.

REFLECTIONS.

WE have here an emblem of the total destruction of the *Jews*, who were to be consumed by the fire of God's

God's wrath; and likewise of the cause of their ruin, which were the sins and iniquities of that people, who were like a barren vine and unprofitable branch. Our Lord makes use of the same similitude to represent what the wicked have reason to expect, when he says, *If any man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gathereth them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.* And John the Baptist denounced the same punishment against the unbelievers, in these words; *Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire.*

CHAP. XVI.

EZEKIEL makes use of the parable of an adulterous woman, to shew that God had chosen the *Jews*, and had heaped his favours upon them; but they had dealt very treacherously against him, and particularly by their idolatry had broken the covenant he had made with them. He reproaches the *Jews* of *Jerusalem*, for imitating, and even exceeding *Samaria*, that is, the *Israelites* of the ten tribes, in their idolatrous worship; and for defiling themselves with the abominations of the *Egyptians*, *Affyrians*, and *Chaldeans*; he compares them to *Sodom*, which he calls their sister; and he threatens them with a dreadful and inevitable destruction; promising, however, that God would have compassion on part of them, and after he had humbled them, would receive them again into covenant with him.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT we read in this chapter represents the sin of those who have been received into covenant with God, and highly favoured, and notwithstanding this, fall into ingratitude and unbelief, casting off the obedience they owe to him, which the scripture calls spiritual adultery; to shew that men, by acting thus, break the covenant they had made with God. From
God's

God's severe reproaches of the *Jews* for not only imitating, but even surpassing *Samaria* and *Sodom* in their wickedness, we learn, that none are more guilty than those who have the greatest share of the divine favours, and have abused them; and that none are more severely punished than they. It is, however, to be remarked, that God declares, that after he had exercised his vengeance upon the rebellious and idolatrous *Jews*, he would remember his covenant, and pardon those who should be converted. The design of temporal judgments is to bring men to repentance, and therefore as soon as they are truly humbled. God is appeased; which is a proof of his goodness, at the same time that he is giving marks of his justice.

CHAP. XVII.

FOR the right understanding of this chapter, it must be observed, that when the king of *Babylon* carried *Jeconiah*, the king of *Judah*, into *Chaldea*, with part of the *Jews*, he set *Zedekiah* over those that were left at *Jerusalem*, and made him swear fidelity to him: but *Zedekiah* broke his oath, rebelled against the king of *Babylon*, and made an alliance with the king of *Egypt*, and applied to him for assistance. *Ezekiel* prophesies in this chapter, that God would punish *Zedekiah* for his perjury, and would deliver him up to the *Babylonians*, with all his people. This the prophet represents by the similitude of an eagle and a cedar, which himself explains.

REFLECTIONS.

WE here see *Zedekiah's* sin, in breaking the oath of fidelity which he had taken to the king of *Babylon*, and applying to the *Egyptians* for assistance; and we see likewise, how *Zedekiah* was punished for his perfidiousness, when God delivered him into the hand of the *Babylonians*, who carried him into captivity. From whence we may learn, that perjury is one of the greatest crimes that can be committed; that this sin brings

brings down the divine vengeance, not only upon private persons, but upon whole nations; especially when it is committed by them that are set in authority over others. *Ezekiel* declares, that God will recompence the oath that is broken upon the head of him that hath broken it, which *Zedekiah* experienced the truth of. This chapter teaches us, moreover, that God does not bless those means, which perjured and unrighteous men have recourse to; and that it is in vain to fly to men, when we have sinned against God. *Zedekiah* thought to meet with help from the *Egyptians* against the king of *Babylon*; and by this means he engaged this prince to make war against him, and try him as a perjured person. It is added at the end of this chapter, that God would plant a branch of cedar upon the mountain of *Israel*, which should grow and become a great cedar, and the birds of the air should dwell under it. The meaning of which was, that *Zorobabel*, a prince of the royal family of *Judah*, should bring the *Jews* from their captivity in *Babylon*.

CHAP. XVIII.

THE prophet refutes the murmurings of the captive *Jews*, who complained, that God had punished them for the sins of their fathers. Whereupon he declares, I. That God did not impute to the children the sins which their fathers had committed, but that every one should bear the punishment of his own faults. This he explains at large, and sets in the clearest light: To which he adds, to convince the *Jews* of the unreasonableness of their complaints, II. That God desired nothing but their salvation, and that he was ready to pardon them as soon as they sincerely repented; and he exhorts the *Jews* with great warmth, to acknowledge the righteousness of God, and to be converted. There are many important instructions contained in this chapter, which ought to be read with great attention.

REFLECTIONS.

THE use we are to make of this chapter is, I. To learn from hence never to murmur against God when he afflicts us, nor to imitate the impiety of the *Jews*, who complained that God punished them for the sins of their fathers, and said, that the ways of God are not equal. II. God says very clearly in this chapter, and repeats it several times expressly, that children shall not bear the iniquity of their fathers, but that the soul which has sinned shall die. To confirm this, God declares, that if a good man has a wicked son, the son shall die because of his sins; and if a wicked man has a good son, the son shall live, and the father shall die. This doctrine teaches us, that God is perfectly just as well as good; and that he never condemns men for any but their own sins, though it sometimes happens that the children are involved in the temporal evils, with which God punishes the sins which their fathers have committed. III. God shews, in this chapter, that he is infinitely good, always ready to pardon even those who have committed the greatest crimes; such are idolatry, injustice, and other sins there mentioned; provided they forsake them, and for the future keep his commandments. This assurance is given us in these words; *Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgression, so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Make you a new heart, and a new spirit; for why will you die, O ye house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth: Wherefore turn yourselves and live.* This great mercy of God should strongly excite us to repentance when we have offended him. IV. We here see the absolute necessity of repentance, and learn at the same time, that the repentance to which God joins the promise of pardon, is that kind of repentance which withdraws a man from sin, which leads him, as it is several times repeated in this chapter, to repair the evil he has done by restitution, and by all other possible means. In one word, the Lord declares, there is no repentance effectual

effectual but that which produces a new heart, and a change of inclinations, followed by actual amendment and reformation.

CHAP. XIX.

EZEKIEL proposes two emblems; one of a lioness and her whelps, and the other of a vine and its branches; by which the prophet denotes what befel the princes of the royal family of *Judah*, and in particular *Jehoahaz*, who was carried into *Egypt*, and *Jehoiakim*, who was taken, put in chains, and carried to *Babylon*.

REFLECTIONS.

IN the 36th chapter of the Second Book of *Chronicles*, we find that the latter kings of *Judah* felt the miseries which the prophet here denounces. God, who rules all things with wisdom and justice, is in a particular manner the disposer of kings, putting down one, and setting up another, as he pleaseth, and generally making them and their families public examples of his vengeance on those sins they have been guilty of.

CHAP. XX.

I. THE prophet, that he might prevail upon the *Jews* to fear God, and above all, to forsake their idolatry, represents to their elders, who came to consult him, the many favours God had conferred on them, in choosing them and giving them his laws. **II.** He reproaches them for their continual breach of God's commandments, and serving idols ever since they came out of *Egypt*, both in the wilderness and the land of *Canaan*. **III.** Because they continued to provoke God, as their fathers had done, the prophet declares, God would pour out all his wrath upon them. He promises, however, that God would have compassion upon some of them, and would bring them again to *Jerusalem*.

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REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter presents us with a detail of the favours God had conferred on the *Jews*, in choosing them for his people, and giving them his laws, and bearing so long with them. We here likewise see how ungrateful they were for God's mercies, how insensible of his warnings, his long-suffering, and even of his punishments; for which reason his most severe judgments were shortly to overtake them. This should lead us to consider, that God has done infinitely more for us than for the *Jews*; he has redeemed us by *Jesus Christ*; he has given us the knowledge of his holy laws, by which we may obtain life; and the warnings he gives us, to engage us to serve and fear him, are not less express, nor less frequent, than those addressed to his ancient people. If, after all, we should fall into infidelity and disobedience, we should be infinitely more blameworthy than the *Jews*, and our punishment too would be much more severe. The promises which God makes to gather the *Jews* together again in the land of their forefathers, after they should have acknowledged their sins, and been punished for them, shew God's love to his church, and his design in correcting men; which is to humble and convert them, and make them the objects of his mercy.

CHAP. XXI.

THIS chapter has two parts; in the first of which *Ezekiel* represents, under the type of a fire consuming wood, and of a drawn sword, the destruction and ruin of *Jerusalem*. In the second he says, that the king of *Babylon* should consult the magicians by lot, to know whether he should make war against the *Ammonites*, or against the *Jews*; and that God would cause the lot to fall in such a manner, that the *Jews* should be destroyed first; and that *Zedekiah* their king, who is here called a profane and wicked prince, should receive the punishment of his perfidiousness, after

after which the *Ammonites* should be conquered and destroyed.

REFLECTIONS.

THE first part of this chapter sets before our eyes, under the similitude of a devouring fire, and of a drawn sword, which spares none, the dismal and unavoidable effects of the divine vengeance, when men provoke God by their sins. In the second part we see, how the king of *Babylon*, having consulted his idols, cast the lot, to know whether he should go against *Jerusalem*, or against the *Ammonites*, though the manner in which the king of *Babylon* chose to determine him what course he should take, was such, yet God was pleased so to direct it, that he turned first against *Jerusalem*. This teaches us very plainly, that God governs all things by his providence; that he even presides over the lot, and over such events as we imagine to depend upon mere chance, and in general over all the actions of men; so that men, without knowing it, execute what he has resolved to do or permit. We are further to consider the ruin of the *Jews*, and especially the exemplary punishment of king *Zedekiah*, as a proof, that sinful nations, and chiefly wicked princes, do at last meet with divine vengeance: and the destruction of the *Ammonites*, who were spared at first, but destroyed by *Nebuchadnezzar*, five years after he had taken *Jerusalem*, shews, that if God forbears chastizing the guilty for a time, they shall not escape his judgment.

CHAP. XXII.

EZEKIEL prophesies against *Jerusalem*; he mentions the crimes that were there committed, such as idolatry, contempt of parents, injustice, oppression, murder, profanation of the divine service, adultery, bribes, corruption, and extortion; and says, that these crimes would cause the total ruin of *Jerusalem*, and of that whole nation. But he complains, above
all,

all, that the prophets, the priests, and the magistrates, abandoned themselves to all kind of iniquity; and that no one endeavoured to put a stop to the wrath of God, which was ready to fall upon that people.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are two things chiefly to be observed in this chapter: I. An enumeration of the crimes that reigned in *Jerusalem*, a little before it was taken and destroyed by the *Babylonians*. The *Jews* had given themselves up to idolatry, injustice, uncleanness, and to abominations of every kind, and had profaned religion and the service of God in the most shocking manner. This it was that deprived them of the divine protection, and obliged God to put his threatenings in execution. These sins, no doubt, God does still abhor, and much more in Christians, and will never fail to punish those who do such things. II. The next thing to be observed here is, that God does particularly complain of persons in a public character; that the prophet seduced the people; that the priests broke the law, and profaned holy things; and that the magistrates were addicted to injustice, dishonest gain, fraud, and violence. From these complaints, which God so frequently makes, we may learn, that when the rulers of the church and the civil magistrates are without religion and virtue, impiety and corruption must needs make great havock, and we can expect nothing but the utmost misery. Pastors and governors ought seriously to consider this, that they may not be the authors of corruption, and of public calamities, nor occasion the eternal perdition of those that God has set them over.

CHAP. XXIII.

THIS chapter contains the parable of two sisters that lived in whoredom, who represent the two kingdoms of *Israel*; that is, the kingdom of *Samaria*, or of the ten tribes, which had first forsaken the worship

ship of God and set up idolatry, and the kingdom of *Judah*, which had herein imitated the ten tribes. The Lord declares, that as those tribes had been given into the hands of the *Affyrians* for their idolatry; so the men of *Judah*, who had been witnesses of the punishment of their brethren, and instead of taking warning by it, had surpassed them in wickedness, should shortly be laid waste by the *Chaldeans*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE complaints which God makes in this chapter, both against the *Israelites* of the ten tribes, and the men of *Judah*, leave us no room to doubt but he is particularly offended, when those to whom he has made himself known, corrupt his worship, and rebel against him. What is here said, under the similitude of adultery, shews, that they who are thus unfaithful to God, break his covenant, and expose themselves to the most dreadful effects of his wrath; and since God declares himself much more incensed against the *Jews* of *Jerusalem*, among whom his worship had been preserved, than against those of the ten tribes; we may from hence learn, that rebellion against God, in those who have been distinguished by peculiar privileges, is still more odious than in others.

CHAP. XXIV.

I. GOD reveals to *Ezekiel*, who was then in *Chaldea*, that upon that very day the king of *Babylon* had laid siege to *Jerusalem*; and orders him to represent the destruction of that city by the type of a caldron in which flesh was boiled, and afterwards made red-hot. II. That same day *Ezekiel's* wife died, but God forbids him to weep, or to use any tokens of mourning, to shew, that the desolation of *Jerusalem* would be so great and general, that husbands and wives, parents and children, and all the nearest relations, could not be able to lament the death of each other.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT we are to consider in this chapter is, I. That although *Ezekiel* was in *Chaldea*, and very far from *Jerusalem*, God made known to him the very day in which the king of *Babylon* had begun the siege of *Jerusalem*; by which it appears, that God perfectly knows all that passes in the world. II. The type of a caldron in which flesh is boiled, and which when empty was put upon the fire again to take away its scum, signified, according to the explanation God gave of that similitude, that the wrath of God was going to be poured upon *Jerusalem*, and upon all its inhabitants, and that his wrath is a consuming fire. III. We must observe, that *Jerusalem* was treated in this manner, because it was defiled and full of abominations; in it blood had been spilt, and its inhabitants committed all manner of wickedness, and remained utterly incorrigible. God proportions men's punishments to their sins, and to the condition they are in, and proceeds to extremities, and makes use of the most severe punishments, when their obstinacy is insurmountable. IV. God's forbidding the prophet to weep for the death of his wife, though she was dear to him, was to shew the captive *Jews* how dreadful the ruin of their brethren in *Judea* would be, since their dead should not be so much as lamented; and *Ezekiel's* obedience to the command, which must needs be grievous to him, shews, that we must sacrifice what is dearest to us when God commands; and that the interest of his glory should more nearly concern us than our own private interest.

CHAP. XXV.

EZEKIEL foretels, that the *Ammonites*, the *Moabites*, *Edomites*, and *Philistines*, who were neighbours and enemies to the *Jews*, should be soon destroyed, because they had rejoiced at the ruin of *Jerusalem*.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

THESE three things are to be considered in this chapter : I. That *Ezekiel*, after he had foretold the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and of the *Jews*, denounces the divine vengeance against their enemies. This shews that God is righteous, and if he punishes and corrects his own people, neither will he spare the enemies of his church. II. That the destruction of the *Ammonites*, *Moabites*, *Edomites*, and *Philistines*, happened soon after the taking of *Jerusalem*, those people being subdued by the king of *Babylon*, agreeable to the threatenings denounced against them by *Ezekiel*, *Isaiah*, and *Jeremiah*. III. The next consideration is, that God displayed his judgments against those people, because they had provoked him, and to punish their pride and inhumanity in insulting the *Jews* in the time of their calamity. It is a great sin to rejoice at the miseries of other men, and to be hard and cruel to such as are in affliction ; and God severely and justly punishes those that are so ; as, on the contrary, he blesses those who are affected with the sufferings of others, and that comfort them.

CHAP. XXVI.

THIS chapter, and the two following, are a prophecy against the *Tyrians*. In this *Ezekiel* foretells the destruction of the city of *Tyre*. He says, that that city, which had rejoiced to see *Jerusalem* laid waste by king *Nebuchadnezzar*, should be taken, plundered, and destroyed by the same king.

CHAP. XXVII.

EZEKIEL describes the great commerce of the *Tyrians* with other nations, their immense riches, and how astonished every one would be at their destruction.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVIII.

EZEKIEL represents the pride of the king of *Tyre*; he says, that *Sydon*, a city bordering upon *Tyre*, should likewise be destroyed; and he promises the *Jews*, that they should return from their captivity, and dwell again in their own land.

REFLECTIONS on chap. xxvi, xxvii, xxviii.

ON the twenty-sixth, and two following chapters, observe, that though the city of *Tyre* was exceeding powerful, by reason of its situation on the sea-shore, its extensive commerce, its immense riches, and its alliance with almost all the nations of the world, as we read in the twenty-seventh chapter; yet it was very soon to be delivered into the hands of the king of *Babylon*, who would take it, and spoil it of all its glory. In truth, a little after this prophecy, *Nebuchadnezzar* took the city of *Tyre*, after a siege of thirteen years, and destroyed it in such a manner, that it was not rebuilt; for the new city of *Tyre* was not built in the same place where the ancient city stood. One cannot avoid considering this event as the work of God; especially if we reflect, that it had been foretold, with all its circumstances, not only by the prophet *Ezekiel*, eighteen years beforehand; but also by *Isaiah*, above an hundred and twenty years before. Moreover, we are to ascribe this destruction of *Tyre* to the idolatry that prevailed in it, to the pride and luxury which great riches had introduced, and to the hatred which the *Tyrians* bore to the *Jews*. Thus Providence humbles the most powerful states, and the most flourishing cities, to restrain the impiety, pride, injustice, luxury, dissoluteness, and other crimes, which usually attend plenty and prosperity. Lastly, We are to take notice, that when *Ezekiel* denounces the judgments of God against the idolatrous nations, as well as against the *Jews*, he does not promise that they should be restored, as the people of God had reason to hope. This

must administer comfort to the captive *Jews*, engage them to fly to God by repentance, and convince them that God watched over them, and would not fail to cause them to return from the *Babylonish* captivity.

CHAP. XXIX.

THIS and the three following chapters are a prophecy against the *Egyptians*. The prophet having foretold the overthrow of *Tyre* in the preceding chapters, in this denounces the destruction of *Egypt*, which should likewise be subdued by the king of *Babylon*, after he had taken *Tyre*. However, *Ezekiel* foretels, that at the end of forty years, the *Egyptians* should return into their own country, but should be there in a very abject condition.

CHAP. XXX.

EZEKIEL continues his prophecy against *Egypt*, and says, that the principal cities of that kingdom, which are mentioned by name in this chapter, should be destroyed with their idols.

CHAP. XXXI.

THE prophet represents, by the comparison of a fine large cedar, that the *Assyrian* monarchy had even been more powerful than the *Egyptians*, and yet had come to an end; and that it should be so with the latter.

CHAP. XXXII.

THIS chapter is a lamentation for the destruction of *Egypt*, which should be reduced to the same condition as the *Persians*, the *Edomites*, and the other nations, who were likewise to be conquered by the *Babylonians*.

REFLECTIONS on chap. xxix, xxx, xxxi, xxxii.

ON these chapters we are to consider, I. That God thought fit to foretel by *Ezekiel*, and by the other prophets, the destruction of *Egypt*, that the *Jews* might acknowledge that the God whom they worshipped was the supreme Lord of the universe, and of all nations, and that they had in vain put their confidence in the *Egyptians*. II. It is remarkable, that *Ezekiel* says, expressly, that God would deliver *Egypt* to *Nebuchadnezzar*, as a reward for executing his judgments on the city of *Tyre*; that the *Egyptians* should be dispersed; that in forty years they should return to *Egypt*; but that their kingdom should not be restored to them in its former condition, being brought very low. All this was literally fulfilled: *Nebuchadnezzar* became master of *Egypt* after he had taken the city of *Tyre*; the *Egyptians* were carried into captivity; and at the end of some years they returned into their own country, under *Amasis* their king; but the kingdom of *Egypt* did not recover its former splendor, and was afterwards kept low and made subject to foreign princes, as *Ezekiel* had foretold. To compare these prophecies with the event, is very proper, to convince us that God was the author of them, that the Holy Scripture is divinely inspired, and that nothing is more certainly true than the doctrines contained in it.

CHAP. XXXIII.

THERE are four things to be considered in this chapter: I. God instructs the prophet in the duties of his office, and the obligation he was under to warn sinners. II. To stop the murmurings of the *Jews*, he declares, that he desires not the death of the wicked, and that repenting sinners should be received to mercy; as, on the other hand, the righteous, who forsake the ways of righteousness, shall die in their sin. III. *Ezekiel* received the news of the taking of *Jerusalem*,

and foretels the destruction of those *Jews* that remained in *Judea*. IV. God complains of the hypocrisy of the *Jews* that were at *Babylon*, who came to hear *Ezekiel*, but would not do that which he commanded them in the name of God. This is one of the most instructive chapters in the whole Book.

REFLECTIONS.

THAT we may improve by this chapter, we must consider as follows: I. The comparison of a centinel, or watchman, whereby God represents the duties of *Ezekiel's* office, shews with what fidelity the pastors of the church ought to warn sinners, and labour with their utmost strength, to recover them from the error of their ways, if they would not be responsible for the ruin of their souls; and it likewise proves, that if sinners do not amend, when they are so warned, their destruction will be just. II. We have here one of the most express declarations of the infinite mercy of God, that is to be found in the whole Scripture. God swears by himself, that he would not by any means the death of the wicked; that he desires nothing but their conversion and life, and receives them graciously as soon as they return to him. The consideration of God's great mercy should fill sinners with confidence, and engage them to repent, and thereby prevent their ruin. III. *Ezekiel* teaches us, that God has no respect in his judgment, but to the good and evil which every man has done; and that as sinners, who change their course of life, shall obtain mercy, so likewise the righteous, if they forsake their righteousness, shall die in their sin. What God says in so clear and express a manner on this head, sets his unbounded goodness towards men in a clear light, as well as his unspotted justice; and this doctrine ought to stop the mouths of hardened sinners, and inspire good men with a wholesome fear. IV. We have a remarkable instance of the justice of God, and of the truth of his threatenings, in the taking of *Jerusalem*, and in the calamities, that
fell

fell upon the *Jews* that still remained in *Judea*. However, it is to be remarked, that those *Jews*, though guilty of all manner of wickedness, and even of idolatry, flattered themselves till then, that they should remain in their own land, and continue to possess it. Thus sinners imagine they have nothing to fear, when they are the object of God's wrath, and his vengeance is going to take hold of them. Lastly, God reproaches the *Jews* for coming to hear the prophet *Ezekiel*, and not doing what he said which teaches us, that it is downright hypocrisy, and the most criminal contempt, to hear the word of God, and not practise what it prescribes.

CHAP. XXXIV.

THIS chapter contains two things: I. Threatenings against false shepherds; that is to say, against the prophets and magistrates, who, instead of taking care of the flock and sheep of the Lord, are the occasion of their ruin. II. It contains promises, by which God engages to save his sheep, to give them good shepherds; and, above all, to send a great Shepherd, who should redeem his people, and render them eternally happy.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS is a chapter, which both magistrates and the rulers of the church ought to meditate upon very seriously. The complaints that God here makes of false shepherds, and the curses he denounces against them, shew, that it is the duty of pastors, with their utmost diligence, to watch over the sheep with which they are intrusted, and to provide with care and readiness for all their wants; and that if they fail herein, they must give a severe account to God for it. This too lays an obligation upon princes and magistrates, to govern faithfully and justly the people committed to their trust. What befel the *Jews*, who for the unfaithfulness of their prophets and magistrates were utterly destroyed,

destroyed, shews, that it is the greatest misfortune to a nation to have wicked rulers; and that all who are concerned for the glory of God, and the happiness and edification of the church, have great reason to pray to God, that he would always raise up to his people faithful and good pastors. As to the promises which God makes in this chapter, to save his sheep, and to be himself their shepherd and their guide; they first denote the return of the *Jews* from their captivity at *Babylon* into their own country; which they did by the authority of *Cyrus*, and under the conduct of their rulers; but they more perfectly agree to *Jesus Christ* our Lord, who is the great shepherd of the sheep, that good shepherd who has laid down his life for them, who came to gather them together in his church, and will give them everlasting life, as he himself has declared in the Gospel.

CHAP. XXXV.

EZEKIEL prophesies against the *Edomites*, and foretels their utter destruction, because of the great mischiefs they had done to the *Jews*, and because they had even proudly opposed God himself.

REFLECTIONS.

WE here see, that the *Edomites*, were to feel the divine vengeance, and that their country was to be laid waste, because they bore a mortal hatred to the people of *Israel*, and had not only rejoiced in their destruction, but had even assisted in bringing it about, and had behaved with great insolence and barbarity. These menaces were not long before they were put in execution against the *Edomites*, their country being plundered and laid waste by the same king that had destroyed *Jerusalem*, and some time after by the *Jews*, in the time of the *Maccabees*. Thus God punishes those who have no pity on the miserable, and take pleasure in doing evil to others; but especially those who persecute his church.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXVI.

I. *EZEKIEL* foretels the ruin of the *Edomites*, and the other enemies of God's people, and the restoration of the *Jews* to their own land. II. He says, that God had destroyed *Jerusalem*, and scattered the people of *Israel*, because of their sins; but that the Lord would have compassion on them, would again cause them to inhabit their land, and would heap his favours upon them; and above all, that he would sanctify them, and fill them with the knowledge and fear of his holy name: And that he would do all this for his own glory, and to convince the idolatrous nations that there was no other God but he.

REFLECTIONS.

THE reading of this chapter engages us to consider, I. That if God formerly suffered his people to be oppressed by their enemies for a while, it was not that he designed to cast them off utterly, but because he was willing to purify them by affliction, and at length to manifest his power and justice in delivering them, and in punishing those that had afflicted them. We should pass the same judgment on the persecutions to which the church is exposed, as well as on the afflictions which God dispenses to particular men in this life. II. The promise God here makes of restoring, protecting, and sanctifying his people, is not confined to the deliverance of the *Jews*, and to the temporal blessings vouchsafed them in their land, after their return from *Babylon*; it agrees more especially to the spiritual blessings that God was to bestow first on the *Jews*, and afterwards on all men, in the times of the Messiah, and was accomplished by the coming of *Jesus Christ*, the sending of the Holy Ghost, and by the preaching of the Gospel. III. What we are chiefly to consider in these promises is, that the design of God in granting us these blessings was to withdraw men from sin, to sanctify them, and to give them a
new

new heart and a new spirit, that they might walk in his statutes, and keep his commandments. This then is what we ought chiefly to labour after; this is the end to which we should apply the mercies which God vouchsafes us by the new covenant, which we have the happiness to live under.

CHAP. XXXVII.

THIS chapter consists of two parts. In the first, *Ezekiel* relates the vision he had seen of a field covered with the bones of dead bodies that were brought to life again; by which God was pleased to assure the *Jews*, that he was able to bring them back from the captivity of *Babylon*, though there seemed to be no appearance of their restoration. In the second, the prophet shews, by the emblem of two pieces of wood joined together, that the Lord would reunite the *Jews* of *Ephraim*, that is, of the ten tribes, and those of the kingdom of *Judah*; that they should make but one people, and live under one king; and that God would make an everlasting covenant with them.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THIS vision of *Ezekiel*, in which God shewed him dead bodies raised to life, tended to instruct the *Jews*, that though they were in a very deplorable condition, and there seemed to be no hopes of their recovery, yet God, by his infinite power, would infallibly deliver them. From whence we may gather, that nothing is impossible with God, and that he never wants means to accomplish his promises. This vision is likewise to be considered as a most express type of the general resurrection. Though our bodies are reduced to dust, God is able to give them life again, and reunite them to our souls; which he will infallibly do at the last day, as we are most clearly taught in the Gospel. *Ezekiel's* prophecy of the two nations of *Israel*, and of *Judah*, being one day gathered together, and
united

united under one king, to serve God with one accord, can be but imperfectly applied to the state of the *Jews* after the captivity; since a considerable part of them, especially those of the ten tribes, never returned into their own country, and those who did return, remained there but a short time, and were almost always under the dominion of foreign princes. This prophecy therefore must relate to the calling of the *Jews* under the Gospel, their union in the church of Christ, and particularly their conversion, when that people shall embrace the Christian Religion.

CHAP. XXXVIII, XXXIX.

IN these two chapters the prophet foretels, that the church should be assaulted by *Gog*: by which the Holy Spirit is supposed to describe the miseries which the neighbouring kings, and in particular *Antiochus Epiphanes*, king of *Syria*, would bring upon the *Jews*, after their return from *Babylon*; the destruction of that cruel prince, and the glorious deliverance which God would vouchsafe his people by the *Maccabees*.

REFLECTIONS on chapters xxxviii, and xxxix.

AS the *Jews* were exposed, some time after their return from the *Babylonish* captivity, to cruel persecutions, particularly under the reign of *Antiochus*, king of *Syria*; God forewarned them of it by this prophecy of *Ezekiel*, and by another of *Daniel*, who likewise foretold the same event; that when these evils came upon them they might not be surpris'd. In truth, they were attacked and oppress'd by *Antiochus*, who made war upon them, put a great number of them to death, profaned the temple at *Jerusalem*, and for some time prevented the performance of divine service. But in their distress they experienced the divine assistance; that prince was vanquish'd, by the divine blessing upon the arms of the *Maccabees*; he became an example of divine vengeance; and the *Jews* recovered their liberty. Thus God was pleas'd

to try and purify his people; giving them, in the sight of the idolatrous nations, signal proofs of his protection; and disposing them for the reception of the Messiah, who was soon to be sent unto them.

CHAP. XL.

IN this and the following chapter, to the end of the Book, *Ezekiel* relates a vision which he saw fourteen years after the taking of *Jerusalem*; wherein are described the temple, and the service that was to be performed in it, the division of the land of *Canaan* to the twelve tribes of *Israel*, together with a plan of a new city. Some apply this prophecy to the temple that was rebuilt after the captivity, and to the state of the *Jews* at that time. But, considering that the second temple was not built as *Ezekiel* here represents; that the twelve tribes did not return into their own country; that the land of *Canaan* was not divided unto them; that *Jerusalem* was not rebuilt according to the plan laid down by *Ezekiel*; considering, farther, that there are laws mentioned in these chapters which were never observed by the *Jews* since their return, and promises which have not been fulfilled; others are of opinion, this vision should be explained in a spiritual sense, and understand it of the Christian Church. Some think it represents what would have happened, if the twelve tribes had been converted and turned unto God. Lastly, There are others of opinion, that these predictions relate to the restoration of the *Jewish* nation in the latter times, when they shall be converted. As all these explanations are attended with several difficulties, it would be hard to determine the sense of these chapters with certainty, and to make any particular reflections on them.

The end of the Book of the Prophet EZEKIEL.

THE

THE
BOOK
OF THE PROPHET
DANIEL.

ARGUMENT.

Daniel was very remarkable for his holiness, his great zeal, and the revelations he received. The testimony given of him by God, in the fourteenth and twenty-eighth chapters of Ezekiel; and what Jesus Christ says of him in the Gospel, proves that he was a very holy man, and a great prophet. He lived at Babylon six hundred years before the coming of our Lord, and was there known as a prophet all the time of the captivity, and beyond it, that is upwards of seventy years; so that he lived to a very advanced age. This Book is made up of histories and remarkable prophecies. We have here the history of several considerable events, which happened at Babylon, both to the prophet Daniel, and to the kings of that country; and several prophecies, which describe the revolutions that were to happen in the kingdoms of the world, and particularly in the state of the Jews; as also the coming of the Messiah.

CHAP. I.

IN this chapter we see how Daniel was brought to Babylon, and educated at the court of king Nebuchadnezzar.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

THERE are three reflections to be made upon this first chapter of *Daniel*. I. The first is, that by the providence of God *Daniel* was carried captive to *Babylon* with the other *Jews*, was brought up at the king's court, and there became famous by his wisdom, and by the gift of prophecy. Providence so disposed all these events for the consolation of the captive *Jews*, and to make known the true God among those idolatrous people, and for the comfort and instruction of the church in all ages. II. We have a noble example of temperance, piety, and confidence in God, in the behaviour of *Daniel* and his three companions, who lived only upon water and pulse, and refused to eat of the king's meat, because the *Babylonians* ate some animals which it was not lawful for the *Jews* to eat, and because their meat was most commonly offered to idols. This piety and temperance of *Daniel* and his friends, who, though they were then but young, at which time men are most inclined to pleasure, and lived in an idolatrous court, greatly addicted to sensuality, yet kept themselves pure and undefiled, should teach all, especially young persons, and those who live among the great, to shun luxury, to be sober, and never to do any thing contrary to religion or their consciences. III. We here observe, that God granted *Daniel*, together with bodily health, great understanding, and extraordinary gifts, and raised him to considerable employments. As God designed *Daniel* for great things, he trained him up for them from his youth, by the extraordinary gifts he bestowed on him, and by giving him favour with the powerful prince *Nebuchadnezzar* and his successors, till the kingdom passed from the *Chaldeans* to the *Persians*. Thus God blesses those that fear him, bestows his favours upon sober and pious persons, and often grants them temporal blessings, as a reward of their godliness.

CHAP. II.

THIS chapter gives an account of a dream of king *Nebuchadnezzar's*, in which he saw a great image composed of divers metals. The astrologers, because they could not find out nor explain the dream, were condemned to death; but *Daniel* rehearsed and explained it to the king, who confessed that the God whom *Daniel* worshipped was the true God; and exalted the prophet and his three friends to great honours.

REFLECTIONS.

THESE are the principal reflections to be made upon this chapter: I. That God sent *Nebuchadnezzar* a dream, and then permitted that prince to forget it, that, when *Daniel* told him his dream, he might be the better disposed to receive and believe what *Daniel* should tell him, and that he might confess that this dream came from God, who alone knows things to come. II. The incapacity of the wise men of *Babylon* to find out the dream, discovers very plainly that those people were impostors, and that none but the true God can discover hidden things. III. *Daniel's* promising the king that he would tell him his dream, and explain it to him, is a proof of his surprising faith and great confidence in God, since, if he could not have done what he promised, he must have been put to death. And since God, upon the prayers of *Daniel* and his friends, revealed *Nebuchadnezzar's* dream, we see that the prayers of the righteous are of great efficacy. But that which is chiefly to be observed is, the interpretation of this dream. *Daniel* shews, that there should be four powerful kingdoms succeeding one another: the first was that of the *Chaldeans*, which was then subsisting, and of which *Nebuchadnezzar* was king, but which was soon to come to an end; the second was that of the *Medes and Persians*; and the third, the kingdom of *Alexander*

ander the Great and of the *Grecians*. As to the fourth kingdom, some will have it to be that of the kings of *Syria* and *Egypt*, who reigned after *Alexander* the Great; and they think what is here said describes what was to befall the *Jews* under these kings, particularly under *Antiochus Epiphanes*, the cruel persecutor of the people of God. Others imagine the fourth to be the *Roman* empire; founding their opinion chiefly on this, that in the time of this fourth kingdom, God would establish his kingdom by *Jesus Christ*; and thus the ancients understood this prophecy. This is certain, that these empires succeeded each other; and after all these revolutions, the kingdom of God was manifested by our Lord *Jesus Christ*. We cannot sufficiently admire this noble prophecy, which extends to so many ages: It formerly served, as we learn at the end of this chapter, to make the true God known among the idolaters, and to render the king of *Babylon* favourable to the *Jews*. It ought to make still greater impression upon us, who have seen the accomplishment of this prophecy, and should fully convince us, that there is a God who perfectly knows things to come. We ought also from hence to conclude, that the raising and overthrowing of kingdoms and states, and the various changes that happen in the world, proceed from God's providence, who has always in view the good of the church, and of those that fear him.

CHAP. III.

KING *Nebuchadnezzar* causes a great image of gold to be made, and commands that every one should worship it; which the three friends of *Daniel* having refused to do, the king caused them to be thrown into the fiery furnace; but God preserved them miraculously in the fire, insomuch that *Nebuchadnezzar* being astonished at the miracle, confessed, and publicly proclaimed the power of the true God.

REFLECTIONS.

IN the remarkable history here set down, we may observe these four things: I. The folly, pride, and impiety of *Nebuchadnezzar*, who set up this golden image, and commanded all his subjects, upon pain of death, to worship it. Idolatry and superstition are always cruel and extravagant, and in *Nebuchadnezzar* we have the picture of haughty, idolatrous, and persecuting princes. II. We here see the admirable constancy and generous resolution of the three *Hebrews*, who, without hesitating, answered the king, that they chose rather to be thrown into the fiery furnace than to obey his command. This is a noble example of faith and constancy, which teaches us, that the fear of men will never induce good men to sin against God. When their duty to God is concerned, they do not deliberate what course to take; but are always ready, when called to it, boldly to expose their lives for his glory, and in the defence of true religion. III. The *Chaldeans*, who cast the three *Hebrews* into the furnace, were themselves consumed by the flames, and *Daniel's* three friends were so miraculously preserved by the angel of the Lord, that the fire did not do them the least harm. Thus God punished the cruel and idolatrous *Chaldeans*, made them feel the effects of his power, rendered the miracle wrought in behalf of the *Hebrews* more visible and incontestible, and rewarded the zeal and piety of his servants, who exposed their lives for his sake. St. *Paul* particularly ascribes this miraculous deliverance to the faith of *Daniel's* three friends, when he says, *That by faith they quenched the violence of fire*. Let us from hence learn to acknowledge the great efficacy of faith; that God never wants power to deliver those that suffer for his sake; that he supports his children in their afflictions; that he is with them in the greatest dangers, and gives them a happy issue out of them. Lastly, The zeal which *Nebuchadnezzar* expressed for the glory of the God whom *Daniel* worshipped, the homage he paid him,

him, and his commendation of the faith and stedfastness of the three *Hebrews*, should lead us to acknowledge and adore the power of that great God, who alone does marvellous things, and who displays his power in behalf of those who serve him faithfully, and put their trust in him. The behaviour of this heathen prince should engage Christian princes and magistrates to honour God, to cause religion to be had in reverence, to restrain impiety, and not to suffer any insults to be offered to the Divine Majesty.

CHAP. IV.

THIS chapter consists of three parts: I. An account of a dream, in which king *Nebuchadnezzar* saw a great tree, whose branches were lopped off. II. *Daniel's* interpretation of the dream, who told the king that he should be driven from his kingdom, and afterwards restored to it again. III. We see the accomplishment of the dream, and of all that *Daniel* had foretold.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS history furnishes us with many instructions. I. What happened to *Nebuchadnezzar*, when he was in the height of his glory, teaches us, that prosperity is a dangerous state; that men easily fall from a state of plenty and grandeur into pride and security, and that then they are most in danger of God's judgment; pride generally going before a fall. II. Observe, That as God had formerly by a dream revealed his will to *Pharaoh*, he was pleased likewise to reveal himself to *Nebuchadnezzar*, informing him what was to befall him, by a dream which *Daniel* interpreted; that this prince might confess that this humiliation proceeded from God. Thus God, in his loving-kindness, warns men of their approaching miseries, and teaches them how they may avoid them. III. The counsel which *Daniel* gave the king, to *break off his sins by righteousness, and his iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor*, teaches

teaches us to repair, by all possible means, the sins we have committed, and that works of charity have a peculiar efficacy to avert the wrath of God, when they proceed from true repentance. IV. Observe the punishment of *Nebuchadnezzar*, who was driven from his kingdom, deprived of his reason, and reduced to the state of a brute; this prince falling into a madness and deep melancholy, which made him brutish, and for a time rendered him unfit for human society. This event, which heathen historians make mention of, was dispensed of God, as is observed in this chapter, and as the king afterwards confessed, that men might know that the Almighty God ruleth over kings; that he does whatsoever he pleases; that he exalts and abases whom he will; and particularly, that he is just, and knows how to humble the proud. Lastly, We have seen how *Nebuchadnezzar* recovered his senses, and humbled himself, and gave public marks of his fear of the true God, ordering all his subjects to revere him, and then was restored to his kingdom. Thus we see, how God's chastisements bring men to a sense of their duty, and procure the return of his favour. And *Nebuchadnezzar's* solemn acknowledgment of the majesty and justice of God, teaches the princes and great men of the world their obligation to worship God, and with all their might to promote his glory.

CHAP. V.

KING *Belshazzar* making a great feast; at the time *Babylon* was besieged by the *Medes*, and profaning the sacred vessels of the temples of *Jerusalem*, saw a hand, which wrote upon the wall the decree of his death, as *Daniel* interpreted it. This decree was executed immediately, *Belshazzar* being slain that very night, and *Babylon* taken by *Darius*. By this means the monarchy of the *Chaldeans* passed to the *Medes* and *Persians*, as *Daniel* and the other prophets had foretold.

REFLECTIONS.

THE history recorded in this chapter is very remarkable; but what is chiefly to be observed is, I. That while king *Belshazzar* was making a great feast for his nobles, giving himself up to mirth, and dishonouring the true God, by drinking in the sacred vessels of the temple of *Jerusalem* to the honour of idols, God caused a hand to appear writing his condemnation; that this prodigy, and *Daniel's* explanation of it, might convince that idolatrous people, that the same God, whose temple *Nebuchadnezzar*, the grandfather of *Belshazzar*, had destroyed, was going to overthrow the empire of the *Chaldeans*. II. The very great confusion and uneasiness of *Belshazzar* at the sight of the hand, shews, that nothing is more weak and timorous than a guilty conscience; and that the divine judgments overtake the ungodly, when they think themselves most secure. III. Observe that *Daniel* reproached the king for not making a better use of the judgments with which God had chastised his grandfather *Nebuchadnezzar*; for persisting in his pride, and setting himself against God, by profaning the vessels of the temple of *Jerusalem*, and praising his idols, instead of giving glory to God. This is a visible proof of the divine vengeance on those whose heart is lifted up with prosperity; on the profane and ungodly, who instead of reverencing him from whom they receive life and breath, and all things, have the insolence to exalt themselves against him; and on those who do not improve the warnings he gives them, the afflictions he visits them with, nor the examples he sets before their eyes. Lastly, The death of *Belshazzar*, and the ruin of the *Babylonish* empire, which then passed to the *Medes* and *Persians*, is an event the more remarkable, as it had been foretold, not only by *Daniel*, but by *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, and the other prophets, who had expressly foretold that *Babylon* should be taken in the night, while the king and the princes were rejoicing; which is also confirmed by the

writers

writers of profane history. This history, therefore, should be looked upon as a proof of the divine authority of the sacred writings, and of the truth of religion; and should lead us to adore the infinite power and wisdom of God, and the wonders of his providence, which with so much wisdom, justice, and goodness, directs all events.

CHAP. VI.

I. *DANIEL* is raised by king *Darius* to great honour, at which the great men of the kingdom being jealous, obtain an edict to forbid that any prayers should be made, for the space of thirty days, to any god or man whatever, except to the king. II. but *Daniel* continuing as usual to pray to God publicly, was accused of violating the king's decree, and was cast into the den of lions, where God miraculously preserved him. III. The king, astonished at the miracle, commands that the God of *Daniel* should be worshipped by all men.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are several very important reflections to be made upon this chapter: I. The fidelity with which *Daniel* served king *Darius*, is an example for those in public posts to discharge their duty with integrity. II. In the decree that *Darius* published, upon the importunity of *Daniel's* enemies, we observe, on one hand, the folly and impiety of a prince who desired to be worshipped as a god; and, on the other, the evils that arise from envy and jealousy, and how dangerous it is to listen to those who make use of craft, slander, and violence, to destroy the innocent. III. We here see the zeal of *Daniel*, who had been religious and devout in the greatest prosperity, and so continues, when he is in the greatest danger on that very account. He is no way intimidated by the king's edict; continues to worship his God, and that publicly, without fearing the danger to which he was exposed; lest, if

he had done it in secret, he might be thought to dissemble his faith, and obey the king's command. On such occasions we must make public profession of our faith, without the least dissimulation, and without betraying our consciences for fear of men. IV. It is to be observed, that *Darius* was weak enough to consent to *Daniel's* death, though he thought him innocent. God did not think fit to deliver his servant by means of king *Darius*; but suffered *Daniel* to be cast into the den of lions, because he designed to send his angel to deliver him in a more glorious manner. The Scripture says, that *Daniel* was thus preserved, *because innocency was found in him, and he believed in his God.* This was a glorious reward of his fidelity, and a surprising effect of his faith, as St. *Paul* observes in his Epistle to the *Hebrews*. Thus God protects his servants; if they seem sometimes to be forsaken, and past recovery, he at last happily delivers them out of all their trials. V. Another reflection to be made, is, that the lions had no power over *Daniel*; but his enemies were devoured by them immediately. This makes the divine protection of *Daniel* the more visible; and thus God brings upon sinners the evil they designed for others. Lastly, The solemn acknowledgment that king *Darius* made of the majesty of the true God, engages us to adore the goodness, justice, and almighty power of the Lord in all things, to publish his marvellous works, and to admire the ways of his providence, who made use of this king's edict, and of *Nebuchadnezzar*, and several other heathen princes, to make himself known among those idolatrous nations. Christian princes ought seriously to attend to these things, if they would not have these idolatrous princes rise up in judgment against them.

CHAP. VII.

THIS chapter contains the vision which the prophet *Daniel* had of the four beasts, and the explanation which an angel gave him of that vision; telling him,

him, there would be four great empires; and that in the time of the fourth, the kingdom of God should be established.

REFLECTIONS.

WE ought to meditate upon this prophecy with great attention. This mysterious dream which God sent to *Daniel*, and the angels explanation of it, denote the very same thing as the vision of the great image mentioned in the second chapter of this Book; namely, that four great empires should succeed each other; the first, the empire of the *Babylonians*; the second, that of the *Medes* and *Persians*; the third, the *Grecian* empire; and the fourth, as was observed on the second chapter, either that of the kings of *Syria* and *Egypt*, called the *Seleucides* and the *Legides*, or that of the *Romans*. According to the first interpretation, that horn, that is, that power which would make war against the saints, but was to be destroyed, is king *Antiochus*, who so cruelly treated the *Jews*, and reduced them to the utmost extremities. If we follow the second interpretation, that power means Antichrist, who was to appear in the church, but whom God would destroy; after which the kingdom of God would be fully manifested. These prophecies which extend to so many ages, and foretold so long beforehand these great revolutions, shew, that *Daniel* spake by divine inspiration; that things to come are perfectly known to God, and that he rules over all things. We ought principally to acknowledge, that among all these revolutions, God had in view the establishing his kingdom among men; and that the famous prophecy, which foretels that the Son of Man should receive of God a kingdom and dominion over all things, and that his kingdom should have no end, and that the saints should reign with him, undoubtedly relate to our Lord *Jesus Christ*; and that he has secured eternal glory and perfect happiness for all his saints and faithful servants.

CHAP. VIII.

THIS chapter has two parts. The first is, The vision that *Daniel* saw of the ram and of the goat, fighting with one another. The second is the interpretation of that vision by the angel *Gabriel*; the substance of which is, that a king of *Javan*, that is, of *Greece*, should overthrow the monarchy of the *Medes* and *Persians*; as it happened when *Alexander* the Great conquered *Darius*, the king of *Persia*. Then the angel declares, that after the death of *Alexander*, there should arise four horns, which signified that his empire should be divided into four chief kingdoms; and that out of one of them there should arise a king, proud and cruel, who would grievously persecute the *Jews*, and cause the service of God to cease for the space of three years and a half; but that he should at last be destroyed. This was *Antiochus Epiphanes*, king of *Syria*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE prophecy contained in this chapter has been fully accomplished, and by the event is made so clear, that there remains not the least obscurity in it. The empire of the *Medes* and *Persians* was raised to a great height, but was destroyed by *Alexander* the Great, who conquered *Darius*, king of *Persia*. The monarchy of *Alexander* was after his death divided into four principal kingdoms; and from one of them, which was that of *Syria*, rose up *Antiochus*, surnamed the Illustrious, who cruelly persecuted the *Jews*, and made divine service to cease for three years and a half; after which the *Jews* were delivered from that persecution, the temple was purified, and *Antiochus* felt the effects of the divine vengeance. From this it indubitably follows, that *Daniel*, who told so long beforehand all these events, was divinely inspired. To this general reflection, which so evidently proves the truth of religion, we must add one particular consideration; which

which is, that God was pleased to reveal all these things to *Daniel*, and make known to him what great miseries *Antiochus* would bring upon the *Jews*, but that they should be delivered from the tyranny of that prince. It was necessary the *Jews* should be warned of this, that when this persecution came upon them, they might with constancy bear up under it. This engages us to consider, that God, whose providence governs all things, over-rules in a particular manner the events which concern the church; he sometimes permits it to be oppressed for a while, but never quite forsakes it, and always sets bounds to the malice of persecutors. Lastly, We ought to pray, that as the sanctuary was formerly cleansed from the abominations introduced by *Antiochus*, God would also purify his church, and purge Christianity from the many pollutions which prevail it.

CHAP. IX.

THIS chapter contains two things: I. An excellent prayer, in which *Daniel* confesses the sins of the *Jews*, and implores the mercy of God upon them. II. A most remarkable prophecy, shewing, that from the restoration of *Jerusalem*, to the coming of the Messiah, there would be seventy weeks of years, that is four hundred and ninety years. We see likewise in this prophecy, that the Messiah was to die; that the *Romans* would take and destroy *Jerusalem*, and cause a general desolation throughout all the country of the *Jews*.

REFLECTIONS.

DANIEL's prayer is an excellent pattern of that humility with which we should acknowledge and confess our sins before God, especially in calamitous times. We learn in this prayer, that the sins of men kindle the wrath of God against them; and that the way to appease it, is to betake ourselves to the mercy of God, with a sincere repentance and reformation of
our

our lives. *Daniel's* prayer for the restoration of *Jerusalem* and the temple, shews, that it is the duty of all the sincere members of the church to be concerned for it, and to offer up continual and devout prayers for its prosperity. The prophecy of the seventy weeks, is one of the most express prophecies in all the Old Testament: it clearly determines the time that was to pass between the decree for rebuilding *Jerusalem*, and the death of the Messiah. The angel who spake to *Daniel* says, the time was to be four hundred and ninety years, to be reckoned from the decree made in favour of the *Jews* by *Artaxerxes*, surnamed *Longimanus*. This prophecy expressly declares, that at the end of this term the Messiah should come; that he would make an atonement for sin by his death; that he would establish and confirm the covenant of God with men; and that afterwards the *Romans* should come and destroy the city and temple of *Jerusalem*. All these things have been exactly fulfilled at the time and in the manner foretold, as we are most certainly informed by history. Thus we have in this prophecy an immovable support of our faith, as it proves beyond contradiction the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, and the truth of the Christian Religion; shewing, in the clearest manner, that *Jesus* is the promised Messiah, who has redeemed us by his death, and strongly engaging us to believe in him as our Saviour, and to submit to the doctrines which he preached.

CHAP. X.

THIS chapter, and the two following, contain a revelation made to *Daniel*; the design of which was to inform him what was to befall the *Jews*, from the reign of *Cyprus*, king of *Persia*, to the end of the persecution. In this chapter *Daniel* relates a vision of an angel that appeared to him in the shape of a man clothed in linen; the fright which the vision caused; and how the angel comforted him, and prepared him to hear the things he had to tell him.

REFLECTIONS.

OF what the angel said to *Daniel* in this chapter this is the sum; that the prayers of that prophet in behalf of the *Jews* had been heard; but that the kings of *Persia* would oppose them; that the *Jews* would be crossed in their design of building the temple; that, nevertheless, God would protect them; that the prince of *Javan*, or of the *Greeks*, that is, *Alexander* the Great, would come against the *Persians*; and that the principal angels, such as he who talked with *Daniel*, and *Michael* the archangel, would be employed by God to defend and assist the *Jews*, and to strengthen the kings who were for the *Jews*, as, at the beginning of the following chapter, the angel who here speaks is said to have strengthened king *Darius*. I. The affliction and fasting of *Daniel*, who mourned for three weeks, should be considered as the effect of his zeal for the restoration of the *Jews*; it being the character of pious and zealous persons to afflict themselves when the glory of God is obstructed, and to offer up prayers for the peace and prosperity of the church. II. We here see how much God loves those who fear him, and serve him faithfully; and how great regard he has to their prayers and to their grief. This evidently appears, from the vision of the angel who was sent to *Daniel*, and the kind manner in which he spake to him; assuring him that he was acceptable to God, and that his prayers had been heard. III. What the angel said to *Daniel*, that he had laboured and fought for the *Jews*, against those who sought their ruin, is a proof of God's care of his church, and that he protects it in the worst of times, and finds means to deliver it. This shews too, that God makes use of the ministry of angels, to execute his designs, and for the good of those he is pleased to bless. But what ought to fill us with the greatest confidence is, that *Jesus Christ*, the head and king of the church, watches over it continually, and displays his power in its behalf.

CHAP. XI.

THE angel goes on speaking to *Daniel*, and revealing to him things to come. This prophecy has three parts. I. It points out the end of the *Persian* empire, and the establishment of the *Grecian* monarchy by *Alexander* the Great. II. The dividing of that monarchy after his death, and the wars that were to be between the kings of *Egypt* and the kings of *Syria*. III. The reign of *Antiochus*, king of *Syria*, his wars with the king of *Egypt*, and particularly his persecution of the *Jews*, his attempt to abolish the divine worship, and set up idolatry; and, lastly, the destruction of that impious and cruel prince.

REFLECTIONS.

THE sense and substance of this chapter is this: That there would be three kings in *Persia* after *Cyrus* who then reigned; that after these would arise a powerful prince, namely *Xerxes*; that *Alexander* the Great would come and destroy the *Persian* empire; that after his death his kingdom should be divided, and out of it two principal ones be formed; namely, the kingdom of *Syria*, called in this chapter the kingdom of the north; and that of *Egypt*, called the kingdom of the south: that these two kingdoms should make war upon each other; that among the kings of *Syria* there should be one who would usurp the kingdom by artifice, which was *Antiochus Epiphanes*; that this king would be several times at war with the king of *Egypt*, would persecute the *Jews*, put great numbers of them to death, and profane the temple of *Jerusalem*; but that the *Jews* would resist him, and recover their liberty; that this *Antiochus* would plunder the temples, would make another expedition into *Egypt*; and that after this God would bring him to his end. Though this chapter is attended with obscurity to those who are unacquainted with ancient history, yet ought not the reading of it to be neglected, since it is one of the

the clearest and most circumstantial prophecies in the Old Testament. It comprises the history of about four hundred years, and in the historians of those times we meet with an exact account of the events here predicted. This chapter is therefore very remarkable; furnishing us with the most evident and convincing proofs imaginable of the divine authority of the scriptures, and presenting us with several particular reflections on the revolutions and wars that happen in the world, on the designs of Providence in these various events, on the persecutions to which the church is exposed, the deliverance vouchsafed by God, and the tragical end which is usually the fate of tyrannical and persecuting princes.

CHAP. XII.

THIS chapter is a sequel of the prophecy contained in the foregoing. The angel who spake to *Daniel* here describes two things: I. The deliverance that God would grant to his people, and the glorious reward he would bestow upon those that had been persecuted by *Antiochus*. II. The continuance of that persecution, which was to be three years and an half.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to observe from this chapter, I. That God has always been the defender of his church, and that he has protected it, when it was assaulted with the greatest violence. Of this we have a proof in what is here said, that *Michael*, the archangel, should take the part of the *Jews*; and in the glorious deliverance God vouchsafed them, after they had been cruelly persecuted by *Antiochus*. II. These words deserve our serious attention; *Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt*. As this promise related to the zealous *Jews*, who should defend the cause of religion, and suffer death under the persecution of *Antiochus*; so we cannot doubt but these words relate like-

likewise to the resurrection of the dead, and to the difference that shall be made in the life to come between the righteous and the wicked. This is the doctrine which *Jesus Christ* has taught us more clearly in the Gospel, and in terms not unlike those of *Daniel*. III. When the angel says, that the wise *Jews*, who should signalize their fidelity in time of persecution, should be crowned with extraordinary glory; this, which deserves to be well considered, should inspire us with great zeal in promoting the glory of God, even at the hazard of our lives, and in contributing all that is in our power to the edification and salvation of others. Lastly, When we consider, that the time of the persecution of *Antiochus*, and the number of the days it was to last, are here so expressly described, we may infer from hence, that God keeps times in his own power; that he has set bounds which wicked men and the enemies of his glory shall not pass; and that what he has resolved, shall always come to pass at the time, and in the manner that he has decreed. These are, for the church in general, and for every particular believer, powerful motives to trust in God, even in times of most severe trial; to rely on his Providence, and to wait with patience in the discharging of their duty till his decrees be accomplished.

The end of the Book of the Prophet DANIEL.

THE
BOOK
OF THE PROPHET
H O S E A.

ARGUMENT.

Hosea, the first of the twelve minor prophets, was sent to foretel the ruin of the kingdom of the ten tribes, as well as of the kingdom of Judah. He also foretold the return of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles; and prophesied about fourscore years.

CHAP. I, II, III.

IN the three first chapters, *Hosea* represents, under the emblem of a marriage with a whorish woman, and of children born of her, that the *Israelites* were fallen into idolatry; that God, to punish them, would cast them off, and reduce them to the utmost misery; that, nevertheless, he would have pity on them, and receive them again into covenant.

REFLECTIONS on chapters i, ii, iii.

WE may in general observe on this prophecy, the great goodness of God, who sent *Hosea* and other prophets to the people of the ten tribes to recover them from the idolatry which was established in their kingdom,

dom, and to exhort them to repentance. What we read at the beginning of this book looks like a real history, and gives some room to imagine, that *Hosea* actually married a woman who had led a disorderly life, but did not persist in it; and it may be said, that marrying her by God's command, he acted lawfully in so doing. However, as such a marriage seems not consistent with decency, especially in a prophet, we may consider it as a parable and allegory. The prophets often relate things which passed only in a vision, or in a figure, as if they had really happened; which we have several express instances of in their writings: and the name of the woman which *Hosea* is said to marry, and the other circumstances mentioned, do not prove it to be a real history; any more than we may conclude, that the parable of the wicked rich man is not a parable, because the name of *Lazarus* is mentioned in it, and the rich man is said to have had five brethren. By what *Hosea* here relates, God designed to shew, that the *Israelites* had forsaken his service to worship idols, as the adulterous woman forsakes her husband. The name of *Jezreel*, which is given to the first son that was born, signified, that God would punish the family of *Jehu*, king of *Israel*, for the idolatry and other sins of that prince and his successors. This threatening was executed, *Zechariah*, the son of *Jeroboam* the second, in whose reign *Hosea* prophesied, being the last king of the descendants of *Jehu*. The second child was a daughter, named *Loruhamah*; which name signified, that God would no longer have compassion on the *Israelites*, but that they should feel the effects of his vengeance; which also came to pass. The name of the third was *Loammi*, which meant, that the *Israelites* were no more the people of God. After this, *Hosea* foretells the calamities that were going to fall upon the *Jews*, for the punishment of their idolatry. However, God declares, that he still entertained sentiments of love for that people; and that after he had punished them, he would have pity on them, and they should be converted.

This

This is the meaning and design of these chapters; wherein we have a lively representation of the infidelity of those who break their covenant with God, and of the divine vengeance on them; as well as of his mercy on those who with true repentance turn unto him.

CHAP. IV.

I. *HOSEA* declares that God, provoked by the many abominations which prevailed in the kingdom of *Israel*, even among the priests, and particularly by idolatry, which is here called adultery, would shortly destroy that kingdom. II. He exhorts the men of *Judah* not to imitate the ten tribes in their idolatry, and in the impieties committed at *Gilgal* and *Bethel*.

REFLECTIONS.

IT appears from this chapter, that in the time of *Hosea* the kingdom of *Israel* was filled with impiety, injustice, dissoluteness, and all manner of wickedness; that even the priests themselves were extremely corrupted; and that this general depravity would soon expose the *Israelites*, as it happened when they were destroyed by the king of *Assyria*, and carried into his land. Their reproofs and these threatenings teach us, that when there is no fear of God in any country, when sins multiply therein, and are committed without restraint, and men cannot be reduced to a sense of their duty, God withdraws his protection from them, and visits them with his judgments. The exhortations which *Hosea* addressed to the *Jews* of *Judah*, to avoid falling into the sins and idolatry of the men of *Israel*, shew us, that those whom God has particularly honoured with the knowledge of himself, ought not to imitate the wicked in their disorders; but on the contrary, keep inviolably to their duty, if they desire to escape his most severe judgments.

CHAP. V.

I. *HOSEA* reproves the priests, the magistrates, and the princes of *Israel*, for being the occasion of the sins of the people, and of their ruin. II. He declares, that God would have no regard to the sacrifices of the *Jews*; but would destroy them all, both those of *Ephraim*, that is, of the kingdom of *Israel*, and those of *Judah*; and that the aid of the king of *Assyria* would not secure them from the evils that were coming upon them.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT is remarkable in this chapter is, I. That the corruption and ruin of the people proceed commonly from their spiritual and temporal guides, when they neglect to do their duty, and break the laws of religion and justice. II. That God does not accept the external service that is paid him by hypocrites and ungodly men, who provoke him with their sins. III. That it is in vain to have recourse to men, when God is not on our side, and that there is no way to appease him, when we have offended him, but by confessing our sins and turning unto him by sincere repentance.

CHAP. VI.

I. *HOSEA* exhorts the *Israelites* to be converted, and promises them, that if they did truly repent, God would have pity on them, and restore them. II. He reproaches the ten tribes for their insincerity in their devotions; and tells them, that was the reason God threatened by his prophets to destroy them. III. He complains, that instead of becoming acceptable to God by their obedience, they broke his covenant, and gave themselves up, both priests and people, to all manner of wickedness, and especially to idolatry.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter teaches us, I. That when God threatens or punishes men, they cannot avert or appease his wrath, without a speedy and sincere return to their duty. II. That piety and repentance, which soon passes away, and does not produce a steady reformation, is useless and unprofitable. III. That what God requires and delights in above all things is, that men should know and fear him; that they should exercise mercy and charity. This is expressed in these words of *Hosea*, which our Saviour quotes in the Gospel: *I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God, more than burnt-offerings.* The end of this chapter teaches us, that when those, whom God has received into covenant, transgress, and fall into unbelief, God deprives them of his favour and protection, and makes them a public example: This the *Israelites* experienced, as *Hosea* and the other prophets had threatened them.

CHAP. VII.

GOD complains here, I. That at the time he would have brought back *Ephraim*, that is to say, the *Israelites* of the ten tribes, from their idolatry and other sins, they still persisted in them. II. That their kings and princes were the first to draw the people into rebellion; and that for this reason they should be consumed by the fire of God's wrath, and become a prey to strangers. III. God declares, that it would be in vain for them to seek assistance from the *Egyptians* or *Affyrians*. IV. He reproaches them for not being sincere in their conversion when he had chastened them.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to observe here, I. That as the *Israelites* did obstinately persist in their sins, though God endeavoured

voured to reclaim them, so men often fly from God, and offend him more resolutely, at the time when he seeks to call them to him. II. That the depravity of the people usually proceeds from the bad example of those that govern them, who infect them, and expose them to a total destruction. III. That it is in vain to have recourse to human means, when God is not on our side; and that he even makes use of those very means to punish those who put their trust in them; as the *Jews* found by experience, who expected to meet with assistance from the *Egyptians*, and were punished by those very people. Lastly, The *Jews*, who cried and groaned under the pressure of their afflictions, but did not turn to God, are like many among Christians, who complain and grieve in time of adversity, and seem to fly to God, but are not touched with true repentance, their sorrow being nothing but a worldly sorrow, and not producing a sincere reformation.

CHAP. VIII.

I. **THIS** chapter contains more threatenings, denounced by God against the *Israelites* of the ten tribes, because they had rebelled against him, by setting up other kings than those of the house of *David*; and by substituting idolatry, and the worship of the golden calves, instead of the true service of God; and by seeking assistance from the *Assyrians*. II. The prophet declares that the *Israelites*, for these and all their sins, were near their destruction, and that after them the *Jews* of the kingdom of *Judah* should likewise be rooted out.

REFLECTIONS.

THE chief reflection to be made upon *Hosea's* reproaches of the *Israelites* for their revolting from the obedience they owed to God, and forsaking his covenant and service, is, that we cannot leave the worship that God requires of us, without exposing ourselves to his most severe vengeance. Upon which we are to observe,

observe, that it is not only by idolatry that men forsake God, but that they may do this by not paying him the true worship he requires of us, which is to serve him with a pure heart, to love him above all things, and to obey him. If therefore the *Israelites* were punished so severely for their idolatry, Christians who rebel against God, and disobey the laws of *Jesus Christ*, have reason to expect punishments much more severe.

CHAP. IX.

THE substance of this chapter is, I. That the *Israelites*, because they had forsaken God to serve idols, should be driven out of their own land, and dispersed in *Egypt* and *Affyria*; and that their sacrifices were rejected. II. That their destruction, when it came upon them, would shew, that false prophets had deceived them. III. That they were as corrupt as the *Israelites* of *Gibeah* formerly were; and that the idolatries long committed in their land, particularly at *Gilgal*, would bring upon them and their children a desolation which they would never recover from.

REFLECTIONS.

LET us seriously consider what happened formerly to the *Israelites* for forsaking the true service of God, embracing an idolatrous religion and false worship, and giving heed to false prophets rather than to the prophets of the Lord. This people, whom God had so much loved, and with whom he had made a covenant, were deprived of his protection, and the privileges they enjoyed, and dispersed among strange nations. Thus we see what ingratitude towards God, and unfaithfulness in his service, expose men to: God at last rejects those who will not hear his voice, and after he has spared them for a long while, visits them for their wickedness, and executes the judgments he had denounced against them.

CHAP. X.

THE substance of this chapter is, that because the *Israelites* had persisted in their idolatry, and their other sins, and had even increased them more and more, they should be carried away from their country; that *Samaria*, which was their capital city, should be taken, with its king; and that God would bring against them a people who should reduce them to the utmost desolation. For the right understanding of this chapter it must be observed, that *Ephraim* signifies the *Israelites* of the ten tribes; that *Bethel*, or *Bethaven*, was the place where they worshipped idols; that the *Calves*, or the young heifers, were the idols they worshipped in that place; and that the *Chemarim* were the priests who sacrificed to those false Gods.

REFLECTIONS.

ON this, as well as the other chapters of this Book, it is to be remarked, that all those miseries which *Hosea* and the other prophets had denounced against the *Israelites*, overtook them when *Salmaneser* came and destroyed *Samaria*, and carried the ten tribes into *Assyria*. Their total ruin, therefore, is to be attributed to their idolatry and impenitence; since, instead of forsaking their sins, they increased them more and more. In this example every one may see that God is just, and that he will not suffer the contempt of his covenant to go unpunished. And, when we hear the prophets frequently reproaching the *Jews* for their idolatry, and denouncing the divine vengeance against them for it, we should remember, that to break the commandments of God, and to turn our heart from him to bestow it upon the world, is to be guilty of a kind of idolatry, which is not less odious to him in Christians, than that which *Hosea* complained of was in the *Jews*, and which he will not fail to punish, by excluding from his presence and from his kingdom those who become guilty of it.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

THE prophet represents to the *Jews* of the ten tribes, that notwithstanding the kindness God had shewn to their fathers, in bringing them out of *Egypt*, and all that he had done to draw them to him, they had forsaken him, and were fallen into idolatry and all kind of sins, which would cause God to deliver them to the king of *Affyria*. However, the Lord testifies, that he was moved with compassion towards them, because they were his people, and therefore promised he would not destroy them utterly, but would bring them again from their dispersion.

REFLECTIONS.

I. GOD reproaches the *Jews* for making so ill a return for his love to them and to their fathers, and for the mercies he had conferred on them; which is a warning to us, not to be ungrateful to the Lord for all his kindneses, and especially for his spiritual favours, which are infinitely more valuable than those he had bestowed upon the *Jews*. II. *Hosea* here teaches us, that God draws men, and endeavours to unite them to him with the cords of love; that is to say, by kind and gentle means, before he makes use of severity against them. III. We see the great goodness of God towards the guilty *Jews* in his declaring, that he could not resolve to destroy the *Israelites*; that he was moved with compassion towards them; that after he had chastened them, he would have pity on them. God is always merciful towards men, sparing them when he punishes them, and returns with his favour and loving-kindness as soon as the affliction has humbled them, and brought them again to their duty.

CHAP. XII.

I. *HOSEA* complains, that the *Israelites* of the ten tribes had set up idolatrous worship, whilst the
worship

worship God had prescribed was observed in the kingdom of *Judah*; and he threatens likewise the men of *Judah* for falling into idolatry, in imitation of the ten tribes. II. He reminds the *Israelites* of the blessings God had conferred on their father *Jacob*, and his posterity, in bringing them out of *Egypt*, and leading them through the wilderness; but reproaches them for the ungrateful returns they had made for all the mercies they had received, and for provoking him by their worship of idols.

REFLECTIONS.

THE design of this chapter was to put the *Jews* in mind of their ingratitude and infidelity towards God, who had not ceased to shower his favours upon them, in order to bring them to a sense of their duty. This should remind us of the inestimable blessings God has vouchsafed us, in giving us the knowledge of himself, and redeeming us by his Son; and should make us sensible how great our guilt must be, and how severely our ingratitude will be punished, if we make not a suitable return for so many benefits. Those words of the prophet deserve a serious attention, where he says, *Jacob had power over the angel and prevailed, when he wept, and made supplication unto him.* The example of this patriarch teaches us, that God will refuse nothing to those who call upon him with humility and perseverance; and that the way to obtain the blessing of God, is to adhere to him by faith, and a sincere desire of his grace and blessing.

CHAP. XIII.

I. *HOSEA* says, that the people of *Ephraim*, that is, the *Jews* of the ten tribes, were formerly very powerful, and a terror to their enemies; but that, since their idolatry and disobedience against God, who had brought them out of *Egypt*, and blessed them, they had exposed themselves to his wrath. II. He foretels, that their kingdom should be destroyed, and that

that *Samaria*, their capital city, should be laid waste; whereas, had they continued faithful to their God, he would have secured them from all these misfortunes.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter engages us to reflect on what formerly befel the *Israelites*, for making so ill a return for the divine favour towards them, and abusing his patience and mercies. God, who had been their protector, and the protector of their fathers, declared against them, and caused them to be destroyed by the *Affyrians*. Let us from hence learn to acknowledge, that men bring upon themselves all the evil that befalls them. The Lord is full of kindness, and has only merciful intentions towards them; but when they return his favours with ingratitude, and are insensible of his long-suffering, they lose their share in his love, and at last feel his severest vengeance.

CHAP. XIV.

- I. THE prophet exhorts the people of *Israel* to fly to God by repentance, not to put their trust in the *Affyrians*, and to renounce the worship of idols.
- II. He promises a return of the divine favour to those who should be converted.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS last chapter of *Hosea* contains these two instructions: I. That when we have offended God, and fallen into rebellion, we must recover by a speedy conversion, by having recourse to his mercy, and making promises of amendment, and by serving him faithfully. II. That God is always disposed to receive into favour those that repent, and to do them good after he has chastised them. God's promises of pardon to the *Israelites*, shewed what would happen to those among them who were recalled into their own country with the other *Jews* who returned from *Babylon*; that God would

would bless them, and they should for ever renounce the worship of idols. The use we are to make of the example of that people, and of the warnings contained in this prophecy, is expressed in the last words of this Book: *Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? For the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them; but the transgressors shall fall therein.*

The end of the Book of the Prophet HOSEA.

THE
BOOK
OF THE PROPHET
J O E L.

ARGUMENT.

Joel prophesied in the kingdom of Judah ; but we do not know exactly at what time. The occasion of his prophecy is an extraordinary drought and famine which happened in that kingdom. He exhorts the Jews to humiliation and repentance ; he likewise foretells their return from the Babylonish captivity ; and what was to happen in the last days, when the Messiah should come.

CHAP. I.

JOEL here describes the desolation to which *Judea* was shortly to be reduced, by drought, by vermin, and by famine ; and exhorts the people to humble themselves before God, and to have recourse to his mercy by prayer and repentance.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

THE famine with which the *Jews* were visited in the time of *Joel*, should be considered in these two lights ; first, as a chastisement from God on that people ; and secondly, as a forerunner of the desolation which the *Babylonians* would cause in *Judea* ;
whereupon

whereupon we may make two reflections. I. That God has several ways of chastising men: He sometimes punishes guilty nations by drought, by vermin, by barrenness, and by famine, as it happened formerly to the kingdom of *Judah*. II. That when God sends any of these scourges, we must betake ourselves to him by fasting, humiliation, and earnest prayer, and endeavour to prevail upon him by a sincere repentance, lest still heavier judgments overtake us. By this means temporal calamities are sometimes averted; but we are sure thereby to obtain pardon of sins, and deliverance from the miseries of the soul, and the punishments of the life to come.

CHAP. II.

THIS chapter has three parts: I. *Joel* describes, in a figurative manner, the calamities that were to fall upon the *Jews*, by famine, by vermin, and by the *Chaldeans*. II. He exhorts them all to humble themselves, particularly the priests, and to turn away the anger of the Lord by a solemn fast, and by prayer; which if they did, he assures them God would have compassion on them. III. He adds a very express prophecy concerning the return from the captivity, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which *Jesus Christ* was to bestow upon men after his ascension into heaven, and before the last destruction of *Jerusalem*.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may learn from this chapter, as well as the former, I. That famine, war, and other calamities, are the effects of God's justice, and the methods he uses for the punishment of men. II. When God appears provoked, we must endeavour to pacify his wrath by prayer and fasting; but that the true manner of humbling ourselves by fasting, is, to have the heart broken with real sorrow, and to be converted to God by a sincere reformation. This is a general duty; but the prophet's particular address to the priests, shews, that

that this is, in a peculiar manner, the duty of the ministers of religion. III. We have here very positive promises, that God would redeem his people; that he would pour out his spirit upon all flesh in the latter days; and that then all who should call upon the name of the Lord should be saved. This promise relates to the times of the Gospel; and was fulfilled when our Lord sent the Holy Ghost upon his apostles, after his ascension into heaven; as St. *Peter* shews in the second chapter of the *Acts*; and this promise is executed in behalf of all the faithful who live under the new covenant, since God pours his holy spirit into their hearts, and gives salvation to all such as call upon his name; which should lead us to celebrate the divine mercy towards us, and to make a due improvement of all the spiritual blessings which he so plentifully bestows upon us in his church.

CHAP. III.

JOEL foretels, that God would bring the *Jews* again after their captivity into their own country; that he would take vengeance upon their enemies for their cruelty and injustice towards them, would deliver his people, and bless them abundantly.

REFLECTIONS.

THE promises contained in this chapter, whereby God had engaged to bring again the captive *Jews* into their own country, and to punish the idolatrous nations who had afflicted them, were fulfilled, when the *Jews* returned from their captivity at *Babylon*; and the *Edomites*, *Egyptians*, and *Babylonians*, who had so greatly afflicted the people of God, felt the divine vengeance. We here see, that God is faithful to his promises, and that his covenant with his people standeth sure; that when he appears most angry with them, he still preserves his love and kindness towards them. Lastly, we here observe the care of God takes in preserving, protecting, and defending his church, against the

the power and malice of its enemies. These promises are likewise applicable to the Christian church in a sense still more perfect; and it is in this light that we are to consider them, and to meditate upon them, for our edification and comfort.

The end of the Book of the Prophet JOEL.

THE
B O O K
OF THE PROPHET
A M O S.

ARGUMENT.

God sent the prophet Amos, who was a shepherd, to exhort the Jews of Israel and Judah to repentance; to denounce his judgments against them; and at the same time to foretel the deliverance of the people of God, and the coming of Jesus Christ. The time in which Amos prophesied, is noted at the beginning of his Book.

CHAP. I.

GOD says, that he was going to punish the *Syrians, Philistines, Tyrians, Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites*, because of their crimes, and the evils they had done to the *Jews*.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

ON this chapter we are to consider, that all the people here mentioned, felt the effects of the threatenings denounced against them by *Amos* and the other prophets; and that God punished them, by means of the *Affyrians*, for their pride and injustice, and the cruelties they had exercised against the *Jews*, whereby
we

we see, that God is just and true in his threatenings, and revenges the injuries done to the innocent, and especially to his church.

CHAP. II.

I. *AMOS* denounces the ruin of the *Moabites*. II. He declares next, that the people of *Judah* and of *Israel* should be likewise punished, because they had forsaken the service and laws of the Lord, and rendered themselves guilty of foul ingratitude; and because, although God had raised prophets among them, to warn them, they had refused to hearken to them.

REFLECTIONS.

THE threatenings contained in this chapter engage us to consider, that God, after he had declared that he would execute his judgments upon the nations round about the *Jews*, says, he would likewise punish the kingdoms of *Judah* and *Israel* for their sins; because they had sinned against God, forsaken his service, abused his favours, and refused to hearken to the prophets, whom he had at several times raised up among them. God punishes sin every where, and particularly in those on whom he has conferred extraordinary favours, when they make ungrateful returns for his mercies, break his laws, and cast his word behind them, and despise the warnings of his servants.

CHAP. III.

I. *AMOS* denounces the dreadful judgments of God against the *Israelites*, and declares, that God was going to execute his threatenings upon them, according to the predictions of the prophet. II. He calls the *Philistines* and *Egyptians* to be witnesses of the sins of the *Israelites*, and of the vengeance God would take upon them: and he foretels, that the cities and palaces of the *Israelites* should be overthrown, and that *Beth-el*, which was the place where they worshipped the idols, should be totally destroyed.

REFLECTIONS.

I. GOD's severe treatment of the *Jews*, whom he had chosen above all the people of the earth, but they had rebelled against him, teaches us, that those whom God has received into covenant, and has distinguished by his favours, are most severely punished when they prove unfaithful. II. *Amos* teaches us, that when God speaks and threatens, all the world ought to stand in awe; and that no evil happens to men but what proceeds from God. This ought to fill us with a salutary dread of the voice of God and his threatenings; and make us confess, that all the evils, and all the calamities which come upon men, are the dispensations of Providence; and that we ought to adore in all things the justice of God, and to submit to his will. III. When we read, that God calls the neighbouring people to bear witness to the great disorders that reigned among the *Jews*, and to see the vengeance that he was going to take upon them; this shews to what a height of corruption they were arrived, inso-much that the idolatrous nations themselves had reason to be astonished, and to acknowledge the justice of God's judgments upon them. IV. The same justice appeared, in that *Beth-el*, which was the place where their idolatry was established, and the palaces and houses of the great men, in which they had committed their crimes were devoted to utter destruction.

CHAP. IV.

I. THE prophet foretels, that the Lord would quickly destroy *Samaria*, the capital of the ten tribes, because of the wickedness, injustice, and violence, which the great men, who are here called the fat king of *Basan*, committed in it, and because of the idolatry that was established at *Beth-el*, and at *Gilgal*. II. He next reproaches the *Jews*, that notwithstanding God had chastened them by famine, drought, vermin, pestilence, and other scourges, yet they were not converted

verted to him; and therefore, that they must prepare themselves to feel the utmost effects of his wrath and indignation.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are two reflections to be made on this chapter. I. That there are two sins which particularly provoke God to anger against a nation; which are, the injustice and oppression committed by great men; and the profanation of divine service, and the false worship paid to God. The other thing we are to learn here is, that God uses to call men to conversion by divers corrections, before he suffers his severest judgments to fall upon them. He had sent famine, drought, burnings, vermin, pestilence, and war upon the *Israelites*, to bring them to himself; but because they did not sincerely turn to God when he smote them with all these scourges, he at last made use of the most dreadful and severe chastisements, delivering them to their enemies, and driving them out of their own country.

CHAP. V.

I. *AMOS* foretels and declares the desolation of the ten tribes, and attributes that desolation to the idolatry, oppression, injustice, and other crimes of that nation; but particularly, to their continuing in the idolatrous worship practised at *Beth-el*, *Gilgal*, and *Beer-sheba*. II. He describes the miseries that were to fall upon their cities and the whole country. III. He tells them, that God abhorred their feasts, their solemn assemblies, their burnt sacrifices, and their whole worship; because they served idols, as their fathers had done in the wilderness; and that to punish them for their idolatry, they would soon be carried captives into *Assyria*, beyond *Damascus*.

REFLECTIONS.

GOD continues in this chapter to reprove the *Israelites* for their two principal sins; namely, that they

were idolators, and that the great men among them had no sense of religion and conscience, but oppressed the innocent, committed injustice, and took rewards and bribes. These reproaches, which so frequently occur in the Prophets, shew very plainly, that those sins are of the number of the great crimes that God suffers not to pass unpunished, and which even occasion the ruin of kings and nations. II. It appears from hence, that God, at the time he so severely threatened the *Israelites*, was so gracious as to inform them how they might prevent their destruction, by forbidding them to go to *Beth-el* and other places where they served idols; telling them several times: *Seek the Lord, and ye shall live. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate; it may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious unto you.* God is infinitely good, and long-suffering towards sinners, does not punish them as they deserve, till he has shewed them the way to escape his judgments. III. We have seen, that the sacrifices, and all the worship of the *Jews* were displeasing to God; that he *hated their feast days and their solemn assemblies, and would not accept their burnt-offerings.* God thereby declares, that all outward acts of religious worship, even those which are attended with the greatest solemnity, are looked upon by him as sacrilege and impiety, when those who perform them trample under foot his holy laws, and have no real intention to please him, and to do his will.

CHAP. VI.

THE rebukes and threatenings in this chapter, are chiefly addressed to the rich and great men of the kingdom of *Judah* and *Israel*. I. *Amos* reproves them for their injustice, dissoluteness, sensual lives, and pride; and he blames them, above all, that at a time when they should afflict themselves for the desolation of *Joseph*, that is to say, of a part of their brethren; and when they themselves were threatened with the

like treatment, they abandoned themselves to mirth and pleasure. III. He gives them to understand, that God, being justly provoked, would humble their pride, cause both great and small to perish in a miserable manner, and take from them all those advantages which they abused, and deliver them into the hands of the *Assyrians*.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are chiefly to observe, in the reading of this chapter, that among the several sins which displease God, and provoke his indignation, there are three which particularly produce this effect; which are, I. The injustice and violence committed by the rich and great. II. A sensual and voluptuous life, luxury, high living, the love of pleasure and diversions, and pride. III. Insensibility under God's corrections, and the examples of his wrath. These were the sins for which the *Jews* perished, and which bring down his vengeance upon such as are guilty of them; wherefore we ought most carefully to avoid them. To this end let us consider, that these sins do not only expose men to temporal punishment, but make them subject still more unavoidably to the punishments of the world to come; and that injustice, a love of pleasures, impatience, and security, are yet more displeasing to God in Christians, than they were in the *Jews*; because the Gospel does so expressly command, and by the most powerful motives engage us, to renounce the desires of the flesh, and to live in charity, temperance, and humility.

CHAP. VII.

THIS chapter has two parts. In the first, *Amos* relates three visions: the two first, which are the vision of the grasshoppers, and that of the fire, represent the corrections wherewith God had intended to visit the *Israelites*; and from which they had been delivered by the intercession of the prophet, and by

the goodness and long-suffering of God towards them. The third vision, which was that of a man with a plumb-line in his hand, denoted, that God was just going to put his threatenings in execution against that people; that he would not bear with them any longer, and in particular, would destroy the house of *Jeroboam*. In the second part of this chapter, *Amos* relates that *Amaziah*, who was an idolatrous priest of *Beth-el*, accused him to *Jeroboam*, the king of *Israel*, of conspiring against him; and would have forced the prophet to fly into the land of *Judah*, and to prophesy no more at *Beth-el*. But *Amos* repeated his predictions, and threatens *Amaziah* and his family with a fatal end, and says, that the *Israelites* should certainly be carried out of their country.

REFLECTIONS.

THE visions related in the first part of this chapter shew, that before God cast off the *Jews*, he had chastened them several ways, and bore with them a long time, being moved by the intercession of the prophet; but seeing that their hardness of heart was unconquerable, he was resolved to spare them no longer. God in his goodness and patience does not presently destroy those who sin against him; he hearkens unto the intercession of good men, and warns and corrects them; but when sinners despise God's long-suffering, he displays on them the utmost severity of his justice, from which nothing can secure them. In the second part we see, how an idolatrous priest accused *Amos* of having conspired against the king, and would have had him leave the land of *Israel*; but the prophet continued always speaking in God's name, and declared to that ungodly priest, that he should see the shame and destruction of his family, and should be carried with the *Israelites* into a strange land. This is an example to shew that the innocent, and the true servants of God, have in all ages been exposed to calumny, and the contradiction of sinners; that the

fear of men ought not to discourage them, nor hinder them from discharging their duty; and that those who resist the word of God, and his faithful ministers, as they oppose God himself, shall never escape unpunished.

CHAP. VIII.

I. **T**HE Lord represents the ruin of the kingdom of *Israel*, by the vision of a basket of summer fruits, which were ripe and fit to eat. II. He blames those that enrich themselves by covetousness, extortion, injustice, and by oppressing the people. Lastly, He declares, that God would not suffer these crimes to pass unpunished; that he would overwhelm the land of *Israel* with all kind of calamities; and chiefly, that he would send the famine of his word to punish the *Israelites* for their contempt of it, and for the idolatry they committed in worshipping the golden calves of *Dan* and *Beersheba*.

REFLECTIONS.

BESIDES the general reflections we may make upon the punishments the *Israelites* drew upon themselves by their idolatry, and by their other sins, this chapter offers us two particular considerations, which we ought carefully to attend to. One is, that it is a very great and crying sin to make use of fraud, extortion, and oppression, to gain wealth; to have false weights and false measures; and especially to shut up and engross corn, and other things necessary for life, in the time of famine, with a design to enrich ourselves, and by that means get the substance of the poor and necessitous. It is very remarkable, that God swears by himself that he will not suffer such sins to go unpunished. The other consideration relates to the threatening of the prophet, that God would send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the word of the Lord. Let us learn from hence, that the most terrible chastisement

tisement God can inflict upon a people is to deprive them of his word, and no longer to send his faithful servants amongst them; and therefore, that those who enjoy those precious advantages ought to esteem them above all things, and make a good use of them, lest God deprive them of them.

CHAP. IX.

I. *AMOS* relates a new vision, in which he saw God standing upon the altar, and commanding that place to be destroyed, with all the people; and declaring, that his vengeance would pursue the *Jews* wherever they went; and that he would no longer look upon them as his people. II. He promises, nevertheless, that after he had dispersed them, he would recall them one day, and would restore the tabernacle, that is to say, the throne of *David*, and the true worship of God; and with this promise *Amos* ends his prophecy.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we see God's severe justice against the *Jews*, and his mercy towards the remnant of that nation. The severity of God's justice appears in the order he gave an angel to destroy the *Jews*; and especially in his declaring, that though they should hide themselves in the bottom of the earth or sea, or should ascend up even to the heavens, his vengeance should pursue them thither, since he is the great and mighty God, the creator and governor of the world. These words, so full of majesty, should inspire us with fear and reverence, and convince us that God is every where, that his power has no bounds, and that nothing can screen the wicked from his justice and vengeance. The mercy of God shews itself in his declaring, that the *Jews* should not be cast off for ever; that he would have compassion on them, and bring them again from their captivity; that he would raise up the tabernacle of *David*; and that then all the na-

tions should call upon the name of the Lord. This prophecy does not only signify that the *Jews* should return into their own land after the captivity; it relates also to the glorious establishment of the kingdom of the Messiah, and the calling of the Gentiles, as St. *James* explains it in the fifteenth chapter of the *Acts*, where he quotes these words, *After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down. And I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up. That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doth all these things.*

The end of the Book of the Prophet AMOS.

THE
BOOK
OF THE PROPHET
OBADIAH.

ARGUMENT.

The Book of Obadiah is a prophecy against the Edomites, who were neighbours of the Jews, and descended from Esau, Jacob's brother; for which reason the prophet says, that the Jews were their brethren. Obadiah foretels, that God would root out the Edomites because of their pride, and particularly, because they rejoiced at the ruin of the Jews, and had even helped to destroy them; which might incline us to believe, that he lived after the destruction of Jerusalem: But as Joel, chap. iii. 19, and Amos, chap. i. 11, 12, reprove and threaten the Edomites in the same manner, and the prophecy of Obadiah is placed immediately after that of Joel and Amos, we must suppose these three prophets lived at the same time; and that what is said in this Book of the miseries that had befallen the Jews, relates to some other calamities which they had been exposed to; as we read 2 Chron. xxi. 16, 17, and xxv. 21. Obadiah foretels likewise, that the Jews should return into their own land, and even possess part of the country of the Edomites.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

THE prophecy of *Obadiah* has this peculiarity in it, that he prophesied not against the *Jews*, but against another nation, even against the *Edomites*. Two things are to be considered in this Book. The first is, that the ruin of the *Edomites* happened as *Obadiah* and the other prophets had foretold; for the *Chaldeans* took and destroyed *Edom* soon after *Jerusalem* was taken; and when the *Jews* were returned into their own land, they gained great advantages over the *Edomites*, and became masters of a part of their country. These events, which so exactly answer the predictions of *Obadiah*, prove the divine authority of his prophecy. The second reflection relates to the cause of their destruction. The prophet several times declares, that they were thus treated on account of their pride, their vain confidence, and particularly because they had rejoiced to see the miseries of the *Jews*, their neighbours and brethren: and had even helped to destroy them; killing those who had escaped the rage of the *Babylonians*, when *Jerusalem* was taken. Thus Providence brings down proud and cruel people, severely punishes those who insult the miserable and delight in their sufferings, and takes vengeance on the enemies of the church, and those who oppose his glory.

The end of the Book of the Prophet OBADIAH.

THE
BOOK
OF THE PROPHET
J O N A H.

ARGUMENT.

Jonah lived in the time of Jereboam the Second, king of Israel. He was sent from God to Nineveh, the capital of the empire of the Assyrians, to denounce the ruin of that city : And this Book informs us what was the success of his ministry. Jonah uttered other prophecies besides that contained in this Book ; as may be concluded from the fourteenth chapter of the Second Book of Kings. Jonah is the only prophet, whose writings are handed down to us, that was sent to any strange nation. What our Lord says in the Gospel, confirms the truth of what is contained in this Book, and shews, that Jonah was a prophet sent from God.

CHAP. I

I. **G**OD sends *Jonah* to *Nineveh* ; but the prophet being afraid to go thither, embarks to go to *Tarshish*. II. God raises a great tempest, and *Jonah* is cast into the sea to allay the storm.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

IT may be observed in general upon the Book of *Jonah*, that God sent that prophet to the *Ninevites*, and to the *Assyrians*, that those idolators and enemies of the *Jews*, who were in a short time to destroy the kingdom of the ten tribes, might know that the God of *Israel* was the Almighty God, who would overthrow their city, as it happened some time after. The particular reflections to be made on this chapter are three: I. That *Jonah*, fearing to go to discharge his commission at *Nineveh*, attempted to fly into a distant country. This was the effect of the prophet's weakness, which, upon this occasion, got the better of his piety. They who have not courage to obey the divine call, are guilty of a sin like that of *Jonah*; but this the ministers of God are particularly guilty of, who, through shame or the fear of men, dare not speak to them in his name. II. The storm which suddenly came upon *Jonah*, and those that sailed with him, and which God sent, teaches us, that it is in vain to think of escaping his knowledge, or flying from his authority; since he pursues and finds out those that refuse to obey him, who, wherever they are, cannot escape his justice. III. We must observe, that *Jonah* was discovered by lot, cast into the sea, and swallowed by a fish. By this means God was pleased to punish the prophet for his disobedience, make him sensible of the greatness of his crime, and engaged him to confess it before those who were with him in the ship, and to repair it afterwards by going to *Nineveh*. Thus God proposed to inspire those idolators with fear that were with *Jonah*, and lead them to revere and proclaim the power of that God whose minister *Jonah* was; which accordingly they did when the storm ceased. What happened on this occasion shews likewise, that the lot, as well as all other events, are at the disposal of Divine Providence.

CHAP. II.

JONAH being cast into the sea, is swallowed by a great fish, in whose belly he remained three days and three nights. He prays to God, and thanks him for delivering him; and the fish casts him upon the shore.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE manner in which God preserved *Jonah*, causing him to be swallowed by a great fish, when he was cast into the sea, is a new miracle, which discovers the power of God, at the same time that it displays his goodness towards the prophet. Thus God shews his mercy, at the same time he is giving proofs of his justice; and when he chastises he designs to preserve and bless. II. *Jonah's* prayer to God, when he had brought him up from the depth of the sea, and when the fish which had swallowed him up was going to cast him upon the shore, shews the great faith and thankfulness of the prophet, as well as his return to his duty. III. The deliverance of *Jonah*, when he came out of the belly of the fish, is another wonderful event, which displays in an illustrious manner the power and goodness of God. But what we are chiefly to take notice of in this event is, that the miraculous manner in which God restored *Jonah* to life the third day, was a very express type of the death and resurrection of our Lord. This *Jesus Christ* himself teaches us in the Gospel, where he says, *That as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so the Son of Man shall be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, and on the third day he shall rise again.*

CHAP. III.

JONAH being sent a second time to *Nineveh*, declares to the people of that great city, that it was going to be destroyed; at which the king and the inhabitants being moved, fasted and humbled themselves before God, which prevailed upon him to spare them.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS history presents us with the following reflections: I. That *Jonah*, who was afraid to go to *Nineveh* the first time the Lord sent him, after he had felt the effects of God's power, went thither boldly. This example shews, that the divine corrections are of great use, as they serve to recover men from their errors, awaken the zeal of good men, and lead them to a more faithful discharge of their duty. II. God commanded *Jonah* to go to *Nineveh*, and threaten the inhabitants of that great city, which was sunk in idolatry, luxury, and dissoluteness, with a speedy and total destruction. The warning God gave the *Ninevites* of their approaching ruin, is a proof on one hand, that he was provoked at the abominable crimes they were addicted to; and on the other, it is a token of his mercy towards that people. Thus the sins of men, and particularly those committed in great cities and the courts of princes, provoke God's wrath and indignation; and yet God in his mercy, threatens men before he punishes them, that they may prevent his judgments by repentance. III. The king of *Nineveh* and his people, who had been informed of the miracle that had happened in the person of *Jonah* humbled themselves, and forsook their sins, and God was reconciled towards them. This teaches us, that fasting, humiliation, and conversion, are most effectual means of averting the divine anger; and that God, who is infinitely gracious, forgives the most guilty, when they forsake their sins. Lastly, This history

history should call to mind what our Lord says in the Gospel upon this occasion; *The men of Nineveh shall rise up in judgment against this generation, and shall condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold a greater than Jonah is here.* By this we may judge, that Christians, who are called to repentance by the voice of *Jesus Christ* himself, shall certainly be condemned, if they refuse to hear the call.

CHAP. IV.

JONAH, seeing God had spared the *Ninevites*, is grieved, and wishes for death: But God, to convince him how unreasonable it was to grieve as he did, caused a plant to wither, under which the prophet was sheltered.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE displeasure of the prophet at God's sparing the *Ninevites*, must be considered as one of those weaknesses which are sometimes found in persons of true piety, and which God graciously pardons. However, his displeasure proceeded from a fear of being exposed to some ill treatment in that country, and passing for a false prophet, since his threatenings had not been executed. II. It is to be observed, that God caused the plant to wither under whose shade *Jonah* sat, and when the prophet grieved at it, he shewed him how unreasonable it was to be so much concerned and afraid, because God had spared *Nineveh*. What God said to *Jonah* on this occasion, expresses his great goodness towards this prophet, and especially his great mercy towards all men, which was extended even to little children. The all-gracious God hates none of his creatures; and, far from making them miserable, and taking pleasure in their sufferings, he is inclined to spare them, and do them good. This mercy of God ought to affect our hearts
with

with love and gratitude towards him, inspire us with sentiments of love towards all men, and engage us to be merciful, as our Father, which is in heaven, is merciful.

The end of the Book of the Prophet JONAH.

THE
BOOK
OF THE PROPHET
MICAH.

ARGUMENT.

Micah lived in the time of Isaiah and of Hosea. The design of his prophecy is, to reprove the Jews for their sins, both those of the kingdom of Israel, and chiefly those of Judah; to denounce their ruin, and to foretel the restoration of the people of God, and the coming of the Messiah.

CHAP. I.

I. THE prophet says, that God was preparing to destroy *Samariah*, the capital of the kingdom of *Israel*, and *Jerusalem* the capital of *Judah*, because these two kingdoms had given themselves up to idolatry. II. He foretels likewise the ruin of several cities in the land of *Israel* and *Judah*, such as *Saphir*, *Zaanin*, *Maroth*, *Lachish*, and some others.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

I, WE are to consider in general, on this first chapter, that the event proved the truth and divinity of this prophecy; the kingdom of *Israel* having been destroyed by the *Assyrians*, and that of *Judah*, after it had

had been attacked by the same *Affyrians* in the reign of *Hezekiah*, being at last destroyed by the *Babylonians*, and the people led away into captivity. II. We should take particular notice of that pompous description of the majesty and power of the Lord, which the prophet gives at the beginning of this Book. It teaches us, that God is a being of unbounded power, that nothing can resist him, and that, as he employs this power to protect such as fear him, so likewise he makes use of it to punish them that offend him. This we have an example of in the destruction of the chief cities of *Israel* and *Judah*, and even of these two whole kingdoms; who, for having provoked God to wrath by their idolatry, and by divers crimes, found themselves at last deprived of his protection, and delivered into the hands of their enemies.

CHAP. II.

MICAH, after he had in the former chapter described the idolatry of the *Jews*, in this complains of the injustice and extortion committed among them, principally by their great men and rulers, and threatens them with sudden destruction.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE prophet complains in this chapter, that *Jews*, and particularly their rulers, were covetous and unjust, and had no other design but to enrich themselves, and made use of every means to this end. Moreover, he accuses them of attempting to hinder the prophets of the Lord from speaking to them, and for hearkening rather to false prophets. Lastly, He protests, that God would soon make them feel the effects of his justice, by driving them out of the land wherein they dwelt. By this all men may see, that the sins of persons in authority, their injustice, violence, desire of enriching themselves, and contempt of God's warnings by his word and ministers, is a mark of extreme corruption, and that God will one way or other

other take vengeance on those sins, when men obstinately persist in them.

CHAP. III.

THE prophet goes on in censuring the *Jews* for their sins. I. He reproaches the magistrates for their avarice, injustice, and other misdemeanors. II. He speaks against the false prophets, who deceived the *Jews*, promising them peace, in hopes thereby of promoting their own interest. III. He declares, in the name of the Lord, that these sins of the rulers of the people would cause God quickly to overthrow *Jerusalem* and the temple, and reduce them to a ruinous heap.

REFLECTIONS.

THE censures contained in this chapter are addressed to the princes, and magistrates, and prophets of *Israel*. They shew, that the depravity of the *Jews* was general, and past remedy, in the time of the prophet *Micah*; but that the source of the corruption was in those who were at the head of the nation. The judges and magistrates openly practised injustice, judged for rewards, and took bribes. Besides, the prophets and priests, who would have opposed the corruption, were prevaricators and mercenary, who, by flattering the people, lulled them in their security. These are the crimes for which the prophets very frequently reproach the *Jewish* princes, and for which *Micah* declares, that *Sion* and *Jerusalem* should be made an heap of stones. By this every one may see to what degree the crimes of persons in a public character, as unrighteousness in judgment, and infidelity in the ministers of religion, provoke the Lord, and the great evils they bring upon the whole nation. This is what judges and magistrates, as well as pastors, should continually and seriously consider. The ministers of God, in particular, ought to imitate the holy confidence of *Micah*, and be, like him, filled with the spirit of God, to tell *Jacob his trespasss, and Israel his sin*;

sin; that is, to rebuke vice with great freedom in all persons, and to declare to men all that God has commanded them to say in his name; taking heed above all things not to lull sinners, by giving them false hopes, or concealing the miseries that threaten them.

CHAP. IV.

THE prophet foretels: I. That all nations should be called to the knowledge of the true God. II. That though the *Jews* were to go into captivity at *Babylon*, God would give them peace, and victory over their enemies.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter contains two prophecies: the first foretels, that all nations should be enlightened with the knowledge of the true God, and should come and worship and serve him. The state of religion, and the divine worship at *Jerusalem*, after the return of the *Jews* from the *Babylonish* captivity, does not fully answer the majesty of this prophecy. But we have seen the accomplishment of it in the calling of the Gentiles, and their conversion to Christianity. This great and happy event should convince us of the truth of the Christian Religion, and the divinity of the prophecies which went before concerning it, and produce in us great gratitude towards God, and fervent zeal for his service. *Micah's* second prediction shews, that the *Jews* should be carried captives to *Babylon*, but that they should return, and dwell in *Judea*, and that all their enemies should be confounded. This prophecy was fulfilled as well as the former, which should serve to confirm us still more in the faith. We here likewise have an evident proof of the goodness of God, and his love to his people; since while he threatens the *Jews* to send them to *Babylon*, and deliver them to strange nations, he promises to bring them again to their own land, and to make them triumph over all their enemies.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

THE predictions in this chapter describe, I. The wars that would be in *Judea*, the siege of *Jerusalem*, the fall of the *Jewish* government, the coming of the Messiah, who was to be born at *Bethlehem*, and the establishing of his kingdom. II. *Micah* foretels, that the *Israelites* should be delivered from the *Affyrians* and *Babylonians*, who were to be given into the hand of their enemies, and utterly destroyed.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter contains several predictions, which have all been verified by the event. We here see the miseries which afflicted the *Jews* before the coming of our Lord: But above all, we here meet with an express prophecy, foretelling that the Messiah should come out of the town of *Bethlehem*. This prophecy perfectly agrees with *Jesus Christ*, as St. *Matthew* remarks in the second chapter of his Gospel, and can be applied to no other. The other predictions of the prophet have likewise been fulfilled. The *Jews* were delivered and protected by kings raised up by God to that end, and returned into *Judea*; the *Affyrian* and *Babylonian* empires came to an end, and *Babylon* was utterly destroyed. So that the divinity of the prophecies, and the truth of God's promises, cannot be called in question, any more than the truth of religion in general, and our obligation to practise the duties it prescribes.

CHAP. VI.

I. THE Lord complains, after a very earnest and affecting manner, of the ingratitude of the *Jews* who, notwithstanding his favours at all times bestowed upon them, rebelled against him, and forsook him. II. He tells them, that their sacrifices and oblations were not able to turn away his wrath; and that the

only way to become acceptable to him, was to do what was right. Lastly, he reproaches them for the injustice, deceit, and violence, which were committed among them. But he especially accuses them of keeping the statutes of *Omri* and *Ahab*; that is, of following the idolatrous worship which those kings had introduced in the kingdom of the ten tribes; and he declares that the Lord, provoked by all these crimes, would overtake them with his judgments.

REFLECTIONS.

FROM this chapter we learn. I. That God is perfectly just, and at the same time full of goodness towards men; that he only seeks to make them happy; and that he loads them with his favours, to engage them to love and fear him. This *Micah* expresses in most affecting terms, when he says, that God pleads with his people, and asks them, *O my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.* These words shew, in the clearest manner, that men are guilty of foul ingratitude when they rebel against a good and gracious God; and that if they thereby bring down his wrath upon them, they are without excuse. II. The next instruction is, *That it is not with sacrifices and burnt-offerings, or oblations, that God will be pleased; but that he has shewed us what is good; and what the Lord requires of us, even to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.* By these words God teaches us, that the only worship he receives is that which is attended with uprightness and innocence of life, with charity and humility of heart. These are the essential duties of religion; for the neglect of which the *Jews*, who were otherwise careful enough in the practice of the ceremonies, and external duties of divine worship, perished in a miserable manner. Lastly, Since God declares, he will not justify the unjust, those who make use of false weights, and false measures, and rob their neighbour, either by violence,

or

or by fraud and deceit; we cannot at all doubt but these sins are very odious in his sight, and will bring down the curse of God upon such as are guilty of them.

CHAP. VII.

THIS chapter contains two things: I. *Micah* laments the extreme corruption of the *Jews*, and the vices that reigned among them. II. He promises them a happy restoration, and assures them, that, after God had delivered them, for some time, into the hand of their enemies, and had justly chastised them, he would give them peace again, and would do for them such wonderful things as he had done in the times of their forefathers; for which the prophet blesses and praises the Lord.

REFLECTIONS.

HERE we may observe three things for our edification; which are, the complaints of the prophet, his comforting the *Jews*, and his thanksgivings to God. I. He complains of the strange depravity of the *Jews*, saying that one could not find a good man among them; that they sought nothing but to do mischief to one another; that sincere people were so scarce among them, that they could not trust their nearest relations; that magistrates and judges ran after bribes, and were guilty of all kinds of iniquity. This picture of the strange corruption of the *Jews*, shews the justice of those punishments with which God visited them; and we may observe from thence, that when the fear of God, uprightness and sincerity are banished out of a country, when deceit and fraud prevail, and judges take bribes and rewards, the judgments of God will soon unavoidably fall upon the land for such abominations. II. We must take good heed to those words wherewith *Micah* comforted the people of God, when they were quickly to fall into the hands of their enemies: *Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall,*

fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me. These admirable words teach us God's way of dealing with men, and in particular with his church, when they sin against him. He chastens them, but does not forsake them, nor suffer their enemies to prevail against them.

III. This conduct of the Lord should stir us up to acknowledge and praise his power, wisdom, and goodness; and to say with the prophet, *Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy; he will have compassion upon us, and will forgive our iniquities.*

The end of the Book of the Prophet MICAII.

THE
BOOK
OF THE PROPHET
N A H U M.

ARGUMENT.

The prophecy of Nahum, is a prediction of the destruction of Nineveh, and the end of the empire of the Assyrians. It is thought Nahum lived about eighty years after Jonah, who had also prophesied against the Ninevites.

CHAP. I.

NAHUM gives a noble description of the majesty and power of God, to shew, that the *Assyrians* could not resist him, and that, notwithstanding their strength, they should be destroyed, whilst the *Jews*, whom they had used so ill, should be restored and preserved.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

I. IT must be observed upon this Book of *Nahum*, that God raised several prophets, not only to foretel the destruction of the *Jews*, but likewise that of other nations, and particularly of the *Assyrians*, whose empire was exceeding powerful, and who had greatly oppressed the people of God; their kings *Pul, Tiglath-pileser,*

pilefer, *Salmaneser*, and *Sennacherib*, having come, at several different times, into the land of *Israel*, and made great havock there. These predictions must have comforted the *Jews*, and convinced them, and the idolatrous nations themselves, that it was the Almighty God, and the Lord of the world, who permitted these nations to injure and oppress his people, and who spake by the mouth of his prophets. II. It is necessary to observe, in the next place, that *Jonah*, having been sent to *Nineveh* about eighty years before, the *Ninevites* had then averted the wrath of God by their repentance; but that afterwards returning to their iniquities, and oppressing the *Jews*, *Nahum* was sent to foretel the destruction of their city, and of the whole *Assyrian* monarchy. God pardons men upon their humiliation, and bears with them; but when they return to their iniquities, he at last executes the decrees of his justice. III. We must know, that the predictions of *Nahum*, made at a time when the *Assyrians* were still very powerful and formidable, were entirely fulfilled at the end of about ninety years, when *Nabopolassar*, father to the great *Nebuchadnezzar*, king of *Babylon*, destroyed *Nineveh*, and put an end to the *Assyrian* empire; which is a strong proof of the divinity of this Book. Lastly, what *Nahum* says at the beginning of this Book, with so much strength and elegance, concerning the infinite power and justice of God, teaches us, that since God is so great and powerful, those who offend him cannot resist him; and that nothing can hurt those who fear him, and put their trust in him.

CHAP. II.

THE prophet foretels, that the city of *Nineveh*, and the *Assyrian* monarchy, of which *Nineveh* was the capital, should be assaulted by powerful enemies, and that notwithstanding its strength, it should be taken, plundered, and laid intirely desolate. This desolation is here represented in a figurative and prophetical manner.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we meet with a description of what befel the *Assyrians*, and the city of *Nineveh*, some time after this prophecy. This ancient, powerful, and opulent city, was taken by the *Babylonians*, its houses and palaces were destroyed, its inhabitants became a prey to the conquerors, and the *Assyrian* monarchy came to an end. So considerable an event should convince us more and more, that the predictions of the prophets came from God; that there is a providence presiding over all things with justice and wisdom, and with a power which nothing can resist; and that the same God, who thus punishes and abases kingdoms and nations, is the judge of all men, and will render to every one according to his works.

CHAP. III.

NAHUM continues to foretel the destruction of *Nineveh*, which he calls the city of blood, on account of the cruelties practised in it. He says, that that powerful and magnificent city should be plundered and sacked, because it was full of pride and injustice, and defiled with its adulteries, that is, by the idolatry that prevailed in it; to this he adds, that as *No*, which was a populous city in *Egypt*, (and which is supposed to be the famous city of *Thebes*) was destroyed by *Senacherib*, so should *Nineveh* be destroyed; and that neither the riches, nor the mighty men, nor all the people in it, however numerous, should be able to secure it; and that it should never recover from its ruins.

REFLECTIONS.

IN the destruction of *Nineveh*, and of the *Assyrian* monarchy, which was one of the most ancient and most flourishing empires in the world, we must observe, the almighty power of God, who when he pleases overturns the greatest states. Besides God's infinite power,

power, we may here also consider his justice; since it was the pride of the *Assyrians*, their luxury, injustice, idolatry, and the evil they had done the *Israelites*, that induced God to destroy them. Thus it will always be; God will ever humble the proud, and punish those that live in wickedness and impiety; especially when they obstinately persist in their sins. Lastly, it must be considered, that God caused the destruction of *Nineveh* to be foretold long beforehand by *Nahum*, for the consolation of his people, who were to be afflicted and invaded by the kings of *Assyria*. He did it likewise to prevent these idolatrous nations from glorying in their victories over the *Jews*; and that the whole world might see, that if the *Jews* were vanquished, it was by the will and permission of God, who meant to chastise his people by means of the *Assyrians*.

THE
BOOK
OF THE PROPHET
H A B A K K U K.

ARGUMENT.

Habakkuk prophesied a little before the taking of Jerusalem, and near the time of Jeremiah. He foretold, that God, being provoked by the sins of his people, was about to deliver them to the Chaldeans their enemies; and that afterwards, the Chaldeans also should feel the effects of the divine vengeance.

CHAP. I.

IN the first chapter *Habakkuk* does three things,
I. He complains, that the corruption of the *Jews* was come to its height. II. He says, that God would bring the *Chaldeans* upon them to destroy them. III. He prays God not to forsake his people, to avenge the injuries they received, and not to suffer their enemies to triumph over them, nor to ascribe their victories to their own strength, and to their idols.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

THE reflections to be made upon the three parts of this chapter are these. I. The first relates to the state of the *Jews* before their destruction. The complaints with which *Habakkuk* begins his prophecy, shew, that
nothing

nothing but violence and injustice was to be found among them; the law was no longer of any force to restrain them, justice was trampled under foot, and all kinds of iniquity were committed by them. This was the true cause of the evils that came upon them: and thus does God usually punish those who give themselves up to wickedness and impiety. II. In the description the prophet gives of the coming of the *Chaldeans*, of their cruelty, and of the waste they would make in *Judea*, we ought to consider, not so much the power of the *Chaldeans*, as the justice of God, who made use of them to punish the *Jews*. III. *Habakkuk's* prayer to God, imploring his assistance against the impiety and pride of the king of the *Chaldeans*, who boasted of his victories, and attributed them to his false gods, teaches us, to have recourse to God in all dangers and necessities; and to do this with extraordinary zeal and confidence, when God's glory is concerned. This prayer should moreover convince us, that God is righteous; that his eyes are too pure to behold iniquity; that he cannot suffer injustice and violence; and that he is engaged by his own glory to confound the proud, and all who haughtily exalt themselves against him.

CHAP. II.

THE prophet having prayed, in the foregoing chapter, for the *Jews*, God answers him in this, and assures him, that although the deliverance of his people, and the punishment of the *Babylonians*, were delayed for a while, yet both of them should infallibly come to pass; that he would punish the *Babylonians* for their cruelties and dissoluteness, and, above all, for their impiety and idolatry; that he would make them know, that it was in vain they trusted in their false gods.

REFLECTIONS.

FROM the reading of this chapter we may learn,
I. To wait with patience, faith, and firm confidence, the accomplishment of God's promises, and not to be discouraged

discouraged when he defers the execution of them. This is the instruction which the prophet gives us, when he says, *Though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry: And the just shall live by faith.* II. The prophet teaches us, that the *Babylonians* would infallibly be destroyed for their pride, injustice, rapine, and idolatry. Thus we learn, that the end of God's judgments is to punish men for the crimes they commit, and to shew that he is the supreme Lord and judge over all the earth. Further, these threatenings of *Habakkuk* were executed; the *Babylonians* felt the divine vengeance, as the *Assyrians* had done before them; and by this means, those two formidable powers, who had treated the *Jews* with so great cruelty, became examples of the divine vengeance in the sight of all men. Lastly, What the prophet says of the punishment God would inflict upon the king of *Babylon*, for his injustice and violence, is applicable to all such as propose to enrich and raise themselves by sinful methods. Wherefore, we ought to consider these words of *Habakkuk* with great attention: *Wo unto him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house*, and what follows on this subject. This curse does not less regard private persons than kings; it threatens all those that heap up riches by wicked ways; and daily experience shews, that ill gotten goods are not long enjoyed, and do commonly bring upon the unjust, and their families, all kinds of miseries.

CHAP. III.

THIS hymn of *Habakkuk* celebrates in lofty expressions the majesty of God, which had formerly appeared, when he published the law on mount *Sinai*, and in the wonders he wrought for the *Jews*, in subduing the kings and people of the land of *Canaan*, and of the countries round about, and settling the children of *Israel* in that country. The design of this hymn was to comfort the *Jews*, and give them full assurance, that God would not forsake them, but would again

display his power in delivering them from the oppression of the *Chaldeans*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE use we are to make of this hymn is, I. To learn from hence to remember the mercies of God, to meditate upon them continually, and chiefly to reflect on the wonders he has wrought for us in redeeming us by *Jesus Christ* our Lord, since those are infinitely greater than what *Habukkuk* celebrates in this chapter. II. The consideration of the effects of the power and love of God towards us, should inflame our hearts with love and gratitude; and above all should fill us with firm confidence in him, even in the greatest adversities. God has in all ages given evident proofs of his power and justice; and since his love to his church, and to his children is always the same, it is impossible he should ever forsake those who are his, and who hope in him.

The end of the Book of the Prophet HABAKKUK.

THE
BOOK
OF THE PROPHET
ZEPHANIAH.

ARGUMENT.

Zephaniah was sent to the Jews of Judah, under the reign of Josiah, and some time before their destruction, to exhort them to renounce their idolatry and other sins, and be converted; and to threaten them, that if they persevered in their impenitence, they should certainly be destroyed by the Chaldeans.

CHAP. I.

I. **ZEPHANIAH** declares, that the wrath of God was shortly to fall upon *Jerusalem* and its inhabitants, upon the royal family, and upon the whole kingdom of *Judah*, because the *Jews* had provoked the Lord by their crimes, particularly by the worship of false gods, and by their impenitence. II. He describes the horror of that desolation, and says, that neither their riches nor strength should deliver them.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter..*

I. GOD, in his great goodness to the *Jews*, raised up *Zephaniah*, under the reign of *Josiah*, at a time when every thing was in confusion, and the *Jews* were addicted to idolatry, impiety, and the most shameful crimes.

crimes. The prophet had orders from God to exhort them to repentance, and to denounce their total destruction; which *Huldah* the prophetess foretold at the same time. Thus God gives men notice and threatens them, before he punishes them, that they may by their repentance prevent this judgments. II. This chapter represents the extreme desolation to which the *Jews* would be reduced; the strict account God would call them to, and the severe and exemplary punishment they would be exposed to for their sins, which was brought to pass afterwards by the *Egyptians* and *Assyrians* invading *Judea*, and at length by the *Chaldeans*, who took and destroyed the city of *Jerusalem*. We may learn from hence, that nothing can resist the divine power and justice; and that it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, when he punishes. Above all, the description that the prophet gives of the day of the *Jews* destruction, should remind us of the great day of judgment, and of the terror of the wicked at that time. Lastly, we should reflect on the cause of these miseries which beset the *Jews*. They had forsaken the Lord, and corrupted his worship; and while they remained in this state of rebellion and impiety, they still flattered themselves they were secure from danger; and that God would bring no evil upon them. Thus God punishes the profanation of the divine service and impenitency, especially in those to whom he has in a particular manner made himself known. But what is a mark of the utmost degree of obstinacy, and more especially engages God not to spare sinners, is their not dreading his judgments, though they are so exceeding guilty, nor endeavouring to avert them by repentance.

CHAP. II.

THIS chapter contains two things: I. An exhortation to the *Jews* to confess their sins, and to be converted, before God executed upon them the decrees of his wrath. II. A prophecy, signifying, that God would

would save a remnant of that people; that he would cause the *Jews* to dwell again in the land of *Canaan*; and that the neighbouring nations, the *Philistines*, *Moabites*, *Ammonites* and the *Ethiopians*, should be rooted out, and the *Affyrians* too, who were at that time so powerful, and *Nineveh* their capital city.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are here taught, I. That when God appears provoked, the surest way to prevent the effects of his wrath, is speedily to repent, and turn to him, before he puts his threatenings in execution. II. That the piety, zeal and uprightness of those that fear God, are sometimes the means of turning away his anger; and that the Lord never fails to remember the righteous, when he punishes the wicked. This is the reflection to be made on these words of *Zephaniah*: *Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment, seek righteousness, seek meekness: It may be, ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.* III. The prophet foretels, that God would bring the *Jews* back from their captivity; and that the nations which were their enemies should be utterly laid waste. These predictions were not long before they were fulfilled. The king of *Babylon* subdued the several nations here mentioned, in particular, the destruction of the famous city *Nineveh*, and of the *Affyrian* empire, was seen at that time. All these events shew, that God is a righteous judge; and that he restrains the malice, pride and power of nations and kings; that he takes in hand the cause of his church, and preserves it amidst the revolutions that happen in the world, and in spite of the attempts of those who desire to destroy it.

CHAP. III.

ZEPHANIAH denounces the utmost miseries against *Jerusalem*, because the *Jews* had not hearkened to the voice of the Lord. He complains of the unjust acts committed by magistrates; of the lies of

the false prophets; of the impiety of the priests, and of the obstinacy of the people, who had made a right use neither of the patience of God, nor his corrections, nor of the example of other nations, and particularly of the *Jews* of the ten tribes, who were already destroyed. He threatens them with a speedy desolation upon that account; promising, however, that God would do them good, and give them further reason to rejoice, by bringing them again from strange nations into their own land, and pouring out his blessings upon them.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE prophet here complains, that the city of *Jerusalem* had refused to hear the voice of God, and to receive instruction; that the magistrates, priests and prophets, were impious, unjust, and profane; and that the whole nation was extremely hardened; to which he adds, that though God was in the midst of them, and daily did all that was necessary to bring them back to him, they were strangers both to shame and repentance. These complaints ought to be seriously considered, as they shew us, that God is always just and good; and therefore, that we may not ascribe his judgments, and the evils that befall men, to any other cause than their wickedness, and their resisting the voice of the Lord. Above all, we may learn from this chapter, that the greatest misfortune that can happen to any people, and which most certainly exposes them to the divine vengeance, is when their spiritual or temporal rulers neglect the duties of their calling, and trample under foot the laws of religion and justice. II. We must take notice in the next place, that God had caused the *Jews* to see the destruction of several nations, and especially of their brethren the *Israelites*, that they might learn by these examples to fear him; but because they had persevered in their rebellion, the fire of his wrath was going to consume them. Those who see the examples of divine justice,
and

and the miseries which befall others, and do not improve by them, aggravate their guilt and punishment, and have reason to expect the severest effects of the divine vengeance. Lastly, The promises which *Zephaniah* adds to these threatenings, teach us, that as God afflicts men only to chastise and purify them, he removes the afflictions as soon as they return to him. Thus he restored peace to the *Jews*, and recalled them from *Babylon*, when the seventy years of their captivity were accomplished.

The end of the Book of the Prophet ZEPHANIAH.

THE
BOOK
OF THE PROPHET
H A G G A I.

ARGUMENT.

The three last prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, prophesied after the return of the Jews from Babylon. Haggai was sent to exhort the Jews to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem, and to declare to them that the Messiah would soon come, and that the glory of his kingdom would be very great.

CHAP. I.

IN this chapter, the prophet reproaches the *Jews* for being more concerned in building their own houses, than in rebuilding the temple: He tells them, that their negligence and want of zeal was the reason that God had punished them by a dearth; whereupon *Zerubbabel* the governor of *Jerusalem*, and *Joshua* the chief priest, and all the people, set about building the house of God.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

HAGGAI's reproof of the *Jews* for neglecting to rebuild the temple, while they took so much pains about their own houses, leads us to consider, that it is

is a very great fault to be more concerned for our temporal interests, and for the conveniencies of this life, than for the glory of God, and his service. It must next be observed, that as God punished the lukewarmness and negligenee of the *Jews*, by not blessing their labours, and by sending them dearth and barrenness, so they who want zeal for the service of God, deprive themselves of his blessing; whereas he blesses those who seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness, and together with spiritual, grants them also temporal blessings. Lastly, The deference which *Zerubbabel*, the governor of *Jerusalem*, and *Joshua* the high priest, and all the people, paid to the remonstrances of *Haggai*, teaches us, to receive with submission the divine exhortations; and that those who are in authority, either in church or state, should employ themselves with courage, and to the utmost of their power, in works of piety, and in promoting the true worship of God.

CHAP. II.

I. THE prophet foretels, that though the temple of the *Jews* then building, was inconsiderable in comparison with that built by *Solomon*, yet that the glory of that second temple should be greater than the glory of the former, and that the blessing of God should spread itself from thence over all nations. II. *Haggai* declares, that the *Jews* and the sacrifices had been reputed unclean before God, and he had sent barrenness among them, whilst they neglected to rebuild his temple, but that for the future he would bless them. Lastly, He foretels, that God would destroy many kingdoms, and recompence the zeal of *Zerubbabel*, governor of the *Jews*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE most important reflections to be made upon this chapter, relates to the prophecy of *Haggai*, which foretels that the glory of the second temple, which
was

was built after the captivity, should be much greater than that of the first temple, which *Solomon* had built, and which had been burnt by the *Chaldeans*. Here it must be observed, that the temple of *Solomon* was much richer and more magnificent than that built in the time of *Haggai*; but that nevertheless, the glory of the second would be much greater, because the Messiah was to enter into it. This prophecy, the truth and accomplishment of which can be shewn no other way, plainly foretels, that the Messiah should come whilst the second temple was standing; and as that temple no longer subsists, we must necessarily confess, that the Messiah is come, and that this Messiah is *Jesus Christ* our Lord. This is one of the clearest and most express prophecies in the Old Testament. Another consideration which this chapter suggests to us, is, that the *Jews* were esteemed unclean, and God punished them by scarcity, whilst they neglected to rebuild the temple. From whence we may learn, that we can have no share in the divine blessings, when we are careless, and indifferent in what relates to his service. Lastly, It must be remarked, that, according to the predictions of *Haggai*, the *Persian* and *Grecian* monarchies, which opposed the *Jews*, were destroyed, as that of the *Babylonians* had been; that the *Jews* were supported in their own land; that *Zerubbabel*, and his descendant, subsisted in a glorious state for a very long time; and that at length our Lord was born of his posterity. Thus have the predictions of the prophets always been fulfilled, and the promises of God never failed of being put in execution.

The end of the Book of the Prophet HAGGAI.

THE
BOOK
OF THE PROPHET
Z E C H A R I A H.

ARGUMENT.

Zachariah was sent at the same time, and upon the same occasion as Haggai, which was to encourage the Jews to rebuild the temple. In this Book there are a great many visions and figures, describing what was to happen to the Jews. There are likewise several prophecies relating to Jesus Christ, and particularly to his royal entry into Jerusalem; to the thirty pieces of silver which Judas received to betray him; to the destruction of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles.

CHAP. I.

IN this chapter *Zachariah* does two things: I. He exhorts the *Jews* to repentance, and not to imitate their fathers, who, for despising the remonstrances of the prophets, had been sent into captivity. II. He relates two visions; one of a man riding upon a red horse; the meaning of which was, that God would have compassion upon *Jerusalem*; that he would restore the *Jews*, and watch over them for their good: the other is, the vision of the four horns, and four
carpenters;

carpenters; which signified that God would defeat the designs and endeavours of the enemies of his people, and would bring down the power of the kingdoms and nations which had set themselves against them.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

WHAT we are here to consider, is, I. That exhortation to repentance, which God addressed to the *Jews*: *Return ye to me, and I will return to you.* These words shew, that God is ready to pardon, and restore his peace and favour to those who have provoked him by their sins, as soon as they return sincerely to him. II. God declares to the *Jews*, that their fathers refusing to be converted, and to hearken to the voice of the prophets, who exhorted them to turn from their iniquities, was the reason why he had put in execution the threatenings denounced against them by those prophets. This is a warning to us, not to abuse the long-suffering of God, nor despise either his exhortations or threatenings. III. God sent visions and an angel to *Zechariah*, to assure him, that he was moved with compassion at the sad condition of *Jerusalem*; and that he had resolved to raise it from its ruins and to deliver it from the oppression it laboured under, and to secure it from the plots and attempts of its enemies. These words of the angel are very remarkable, and evidently discover to us that God sees and governs all events especially what concerns his church; that what ever state it is in, he is its defender, and never leaves it in the hands of those that seek to destroy it.

CHAP. II.

I. GOD shews *Zechariah*, in a vision, a man holding a measuring line in his hand; which the angel explains, by telling him, that *Jerusalem* should be rebuilt, and inhabited again; and that God would be a wall to it. II. The prophet invites the *Jews*, which

which were still at *Babylon*, to return to *Jerusalem*; denounces the judgments of God against their enemies; exhorts the *Jews* to rejoice, and foretels that other nations should join with them, and become likewise the people of God.

REFLECTIONS.

WE see in this chapter, as well as in the whole prophecy of *Zechariah*, very plain proofs of God's love and protection of the *Jewish* nation; as he himself expresses in these words: *I will be a wall of fire round about Jerusalem. Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Sion: For lo I come, and will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord.* The truth of these promises appears in the recalling the *Jews* that were captives at *Babylon*, and in the favours which God granted them after their return to *Jerusalem*; but these promises are yet more applicable to the Christian Church; which is the true *Sion*, that shall continue for ever, and into which other nations were to be admitted, and become the people of God; he dwelling in the midst of them, as their everlasting protector. These reflections are very proper to fill with confidence all the true members of the church, and confirm them more and more in godliness.

CHAP. III.

ZECHARIAH sees the high priest *Joshua* standing before the angel, with *Satan*, that is to say, an adversary standing by him. This adversary represented the people that hated the *Jews*, and hindered them from rebuilding their city and temple. But the angel threatens this adversary with the judgments of God; commands *Joshua* to put on his priestly garments, and promises him, as well as the *Jews*, a particular blessing and protection. This is expressed in this chapter by the vision there set down, and by the stone which had seven eyes: These eyes represent the knowledge of God and his providence, which ruleth over all. The design

design of all this was to shew, that God would preserve *Jerusalem* and the temple, in spite of the opposition of their enemies.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter presents us with these three observations: I. That as the enemies of the *Jews* formerly with all their might opposed the building of the temple, and restoring the divine service; so those who labour to promote the glory of God, almost always meet with opposition, but ought by no means to be discouraged by it. II. The angel threatens the adversary of the *Jews*, that God would restrain his malice, and defeat his attempts; that the high priest *Joshua* should execute his office in the temple; and that divine service should be there performed as before. These words of the angel clearly prove, that God was the protector of *Jerusalem*, and of those who had the divine worship at heart; and assure us, that he will always confound the enemies of true religion, and of his church, and will be the defender and support of all such as serve him faithfully. III. We must here remember the remark which St. *Peter* and St. *Jude* made upon these words of the angel to the adversary, who represented the enemies of the *Jews*: *The Lord rebuke thee*; upon which words these apostles observe, that since the angels themselves do not pronounce the sentence of condemnation against such as are exalted in dignity, but refer them to the judgment of God; it is never lawful to revile and speak evil of the higher powers, but that we ought always to speak of them with meekness and respect.

CHAP. IV.

IN this chapter *Zechariah* relates the vision of the golden candlestick and the two olive trees; which vision implied, that *Jerusalem* and the temple should be restored by the divine assistance, and by the care of *Joshua*, the high priest, and of *Zerubbabel*, the governor; who

who are here called the two olive trees, and the two sons of oil, that is, the two anointed of the Lord.

REFLECTIONS.

THE vision in this chapter teaches us, that as God formerly protected *Zerubbabel* and *Joshua*, the two chief rulers of the *Jews*, at a time when they met with great opposition; so he blesses and supports all his faithful servants; and that, in particular, he will defend and bless those, who, being in the magistracy, or in the holy ministry, employ themselves zealously for his glory, and for the edification of his church.

CHAP. V.

THE fifth chapter contains two visions: the first is, the vision of the flying roll, or book, wherein were contained the curses of God's law, denounced against thieves and perjured persons; which vision represents the divine vengeance pursuing the hypocritical and ungodly *Jews*. The time in which *Zechariah* prophesied, gives room to suppose, that these threatenings regard those who made use of fraud and sacrilege with respect to what had been dedicated to the rebuilding the temple, and restoring the divine service. This appears from the reproaches of the prophet *Malachi*, who prophesied at that time. The second vision is that of the ephah, which was a measure used to measure corn with; and the sense of the vision seems to be, that the *Jews*, having filled up the measure of their iniquities, were carried away captives, and that by this means their sin had been, as it were, carried away to *Babylon*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE first of *Zechariah's* visions here set down engages us to consider, that the curse of God pursues the unjust, perjured persons, and more particularly ungodly, sacrilegious, and hypocritical men, who de-
spise

spife religion, and profane the service of God. This curse cleaves to their persons, their goods, and even to their posterity; God punishes them by this means, making them serve as an example of his just vengeance. In the second vision we may remark, that as the *Jews* were carried captives to *Babylon* for the punishment of their sins, in such manner, however, that after they had remained a long time in that country, for their punishment, God brought them from thence; so likewise God punishes and chastises men, when they have filled up the measure of their iniquities; but he does it with an intent to recover them, that they may become afterwards the objects of his love.

CHAP. VI.

I. **A**N angel shews *Zechariah* four chariots, which were going to the several parts of the world. This emblem seems to denote that there had happened, and would happen, great changes in the empires of the world; and particularly, in the four-monarchies, which *Daniel* and the other prophets had spoken of; and that amidst all these changes, Providence would preserve the *Jews*, and execute judgments on their enemies. II. The angel orders the prophet to receive the gold and silver which some considerable persons would give him, and make therewith crowns for *Joshua*, the high priest, and to put them into the temple for a memorial that *Joshua* should exercise the priest's office, and that the temple and the divine service should continue.

REFLECTIONS.

THOUGH the visions here related are attended with some obscurity, yet this we see in general, that there had happened, and were still to happen, great revolutions in the world; and particularly, in the states and kingdoms that had any relation to the people of God; but that the Lord would so over-rule all these events, that the kings and people should do nothing but

but what God had determined, and that the *Jews* should always experience his love and protection. The second part of this chapter shews more particularly, that God would reward in a glorious manner the zeal of *Joshua*, the high priest, and would keep up his worship at *Jerusalem*. From whence we may conclude, that if God formerly protected the *Jews* and their rulers in troublesome times, and punished the princes and kingdoms which had made war against them, he will never suffer all the powers of the world or hell to prevail against his church; and that *Jesus Christ*, the great high priest and king of his church, will always support it, and destroy whatever opposes his kingdom.

CHAP. VII, VIII.

THESE two chapters treat of the same subject, and should therefore be read together. The *Jews* having enquired of the priests, whether they should continue to keep the fasts, as they had done during the seventy years of the captivity, *Zechariah*, by way of reply, does these four things; I. He asks them, whether they had fasted truly, and for God's sake? II. He adds, that God had fulfilled the threatenings of his prophets; and because their fathers had not lived righteously, he had dispersed them over all the world. III. He tells them, that the jealousy of the Lord, and the love he bore his people, would induce him to call them back, and to bless them, provided that, for the future, they would set themselves to do that which was right. IV. The prophet directly answers their question, and declares, that the four fasts, which had till then been kept in memory of the siege of *Jerusalem*, the taking of that city, the destruction of the temple, and the murder of *Gedaliah*, should be changed into days of joy, and that even several nations should join themselves with them to worship the true God.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THESE two chapters teach us, that fasting and prayer cannot please God, unless they be attended with reformation, and that without this disposition, he has no regard to the worship we pay him. II. The example of the *Jews*, who were dispersed among the nations for not walking uprightly, and for despising the threats and remonstrances of the prophets, shews us, that God never threatens in vain, and that he punishes severely the contempt of his word, and obstinately persisting in sin. III. In the promises made by *Zechariah* to the *Jews*, and the change made in their fasting days, we see that God loves his church, and that after he has chastened it, his power brings peace, and causes joy to succeed afflictions. IV. We should carefully attend to what God by his prophet says to the *Jews*: *These are the things that ye shall do: Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates; and let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour, and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord.* These noble expressions teach us, that the surest, and indeed the only way to render ourselves acceptable to God, is to live in innocence, justice, charity, and holiness. Lastly, We have in the last words of the eighth chapter a prophecy, that several nations would one day join with the *Jews* in worshipping the true God; which came to pass first, when after the captivity a great number of idolators embraced the *Jewish* Religion, and afterwards, when the heathen were converted to the Christian Religion.

CHAP. IX.

THE prophet foretels, that the *Syrians*, the *Tyrians*, the *Sidonians*, the *Philistines*, and the other enemies of his people, should be destroyed. II. He comforts *Jerusalem* with the promise of the coming of her king;

king; he proclaims deliverance to the captive *Jews*, and every blessing.

REFLECTIONS.

I. GOD executed his threatenings against the nations mentioned in this chapter, by means of *Alexander* the Great, who subdued them, as well as by the *Jews*, who conquered several cities in *Syria*, *Edom*, and the country of the *Philistines*, as we learn from *Josephus*, and the history of the *Maccabees*; and who gained great advantages over *Antiochus Epiphanes*, king of *Syria*. II. *Zechariah* foretels likewise, that among those nations, God would bring many persons to the knowledge of himself; which came to pass, when several heathens in those countries embraced the *Jewish* Religion. III. We have here an express prophecy, foretelling, that God would send to *Jerusalem* a king and mighty deliverer; that this king should appear in a mean and abject condition; that he should come riding upon an ass; but that nevertheless, he should give signal proofs of his infinite power. This prophecy was accomplished, when *Jesus Christ* made his royal entry into *Jerusalem*, six days before his death, riding upon an ass, and followed by a great multitude of people; and when after his death and resurrection, he established his kingdom throughout the world. This is one of the characters by which we discover that *Jesus Christ* is the Messiah promised by the prophets; and these words of *Zechariah*, *Rejoice, O daughter of Zion; behold thy king cometh unto thee;* engage us to share in that joy, which the coming of the Redeemer was to occasion to the church, and to submit to him as our great and good king, who reigns over us only to make us happy.

CHAP. X.

ZECHARIAH, after he had promised the *Jews*, at the end of the former chapter, that God would send them plenty, and blessings of every kind, exhorts them

them to apply to God, and not to idols, to obtain them, as they had done before, when they were seduced by their rulers and by false prophets, which had provoked God's wrath against them. He renews his promises that God, who was the support of the *Jews*, would gather them again from the countries where several of them were still dispersed, and that he would completely humble the power and pride of the *Assyrians*, *Egyptians*, and the other enemies of his people.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter engages us to consider, I. That since God is the author of all blessings, temporal as well as spiritual, from him alone we ought to expect them; and that in order to obtain them, we must devoutly ask, and with fidelity serve him. II. That all the predictions of *Zechariah*, and the other prophets, concerning the return of the *Jews*, and the destruction of the nations that made war against them, were fulfilled; and therefore we have no reason to doubt but those holy men were inspired by God, and that the doctrine contained in their writings should be received as the word of God himself.

CHAP. XI.

THIS chapter describes in general the judgments of God on the people of *Israel*. These he represents, by saying that he had in his hand two staves, that is, shepherds crooks; that one of them was called beauty; which denoted the covenant that the *Jews* had made with God: and the other was called bands, which implied the union of the two people of *Israel* and *Judah*. He says, that these two staves were broken, to signify, that God would no longer feed or govern the *Jews*, but that he would scatter them over all the world. The prophet adds, that three shepherds, or three leaders, were cut off in one month; the meaning of which may be, that the principal orders of the *Jewish* leaders

leaders should be abolished in a short time. We have here also the prophecy of our Saviour's being betrayed for thirty pieces of silver.

REFLECTIONS.

ON this chapter let us make these two reflections: I. That as the covenant God had made with the *Jews*, did not hinder him from casting them off and forsaking them, because they had broken it; so our covenant with God will not screen us from his wrath, if we break it, and prove unfaithful. II. The other reflection relates to these words: *They weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver; and the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter.* The Evangelists observe, that this prophecy was fulfilled, when *Judas* received of the *Jews* thirty pieces of silver to betray our Lord, and when that money which *Judas* cast into the temple, was applied by the priests in the purchase of the potter's field. This prediction shews, that all which befel *Jesus Christ* was so directed by Providence, and had been long before signified by the prophets, that by these several characters he might be known to be the Messiah.

CHAP. XII.

THIS chapter contains promises in behalf of *Jerusalem*; the prophet likewise foretels, that the *Jews* should be assaulted, but that God would confound their enemies.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE truth of the promises here made to the *Jews*, appeared in the divine protection of that people after their return from the captivity; and chiefly, in the glorious deliverance which God vouchsafed them by the *Maccabees*. II. We must remember that these words, *They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him*, relate to our Lord *Jesus Christ*. St. John quotes them, to represent the great-

ness of the crime the *Jews* had committed in crucifying him; the severity of the punishments they drew upon themselves by that means; and the terror that shall fall upon the wicked, when our Lord shall come at the last day to judge the world.

CHAP. XIII.

I. **T**HE prophet foretels that there should be a spring and fountain open for the *Jews*, that idolatry should be banished from the midst of them, and that false prophets should no more be suffered amongst them, but should be rejected even by their nearest relations. II. He foretels, that God would smite the shepherd, and that the sheep of the flock should be scattered; that two parts of the people should be cut off, but that a third should be preserved and dedicated to the service of God.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT we read in this chapter, relates to the state the *Jews* were to be in after their return from the captivity. *Zechariah* says, that God would pour upon them his grace; that he would cleanse them from their sins; that they would not any more fall into idolatry, nor hearken to false prophets persuading them to worship idols; that, however, that people, and their rulers, should be smitten, and exposed to great calamities; but that there should be in those times a great number of *Jews*, who being purified by affliction, would serve God faithfully and zealously. All these things befel the *Jews*, between their return from *Babylon* and the coming of *Jesus Christ*; and particularly, at the time of the persecution of *Antiochus*. In a more perfect sense, this prophecy sets before us the graces which God has conferred on his church under the Gospel, washing away the sins of men by the blood of his Son, and recovering them from idolatry and corruption, that they might become the people of God, and serve him with purity.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIV.

ZECHARIAH foretels, that *Jerusalem* should be attacked by powerful enemies; but that God would save a remnant of his people, and exalt them to great glory; that the grace of God should from *Jerusalem* spread over other nations; that strange nations should worship God, and submit to his government; and that the enemies of the church, and those who refused to give glory to God, should be overwhelmed with his judgments.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to seek for the accomplishment of the promises God here makes in favour of *Jerusalem* and his people, first, in the state of the *Jews*, after their return from *Babylon*, in their wars with their enemies, and in the signal deliverances God granted them upon several occasions, especially when they were persecuted by *Antiochus*. These advantages raised that nation to very great glory, and engaged those *Jews*, who were dispersed in *Egypt*, and other countries, to come to *Jerusalem* to worship the God of their fathers, and attend at the solemn fasts. But it is to be considered, that the *Jews* did not long continue in that happy condition, not long enough to answer to the glorious promises God had made them; that *Jerusalem* was afterwards intirely destroyed: and that while it did subsist, it could not be said that God reigned, as *Zechariah* here foretels. Wherefore this prophecy ought to be understood in a spiritual and more perfect sense, as it relates to the Christian church, of which *Jesus Christ* is the king and protector; and in which all nations are gathered together to worship God in spirit and in truth.

The end of the Book of the Prophet ZECHARIAH.

THE
BOOK
OF THE PROPHET
MALACHI.

ARGUMENT.

Malachi, *the last of the prophets*, does two things in his prophecy. I. He exhorts the Jews to reform the disorders that were committed among them, especially in the divine service, and to be converted. II. He foretels the establishment of the gospel worship; the coming of John the Baptist, and of Jesus Christ; and the last ruin of the Jews.

I. IN this chapter God reproaches the *Jews*, that though he had loved and chosen them for his people, before the posterity of *Esau*, yet they had been ungrateful for his favours. II. He reproves the priests and the people for offering to him unclean things, and beasts that had blemishes, which was against the law; and he foretels, that the time drew near when men should offer every where to God a pure service, and sacrifices that should be acceptable to him.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

I. GOD, to convince the *Jews* that he had loved them in a very particular manner, tells them at the beginning of this prophecy, that he had loved *Jacob*, and hated *Esau*; the meaning of which is, that he had chosen *Jacob* preferably to *Esau* his brother, to be admitted into covenant with him; and that he had not restored the *Edomites*, and descendants of *Esau*, after their destruction, as he had restored the *Jews*, the posterity of *Jacob*, by bringing them again to *Jerusalem*. St. *Paul* quotes this passage of *Malachi*, in the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the *Romans*, to shew, that God may choose whom he pleases, and grant them extraordinary favours, which he vouchsafes not to others; and that if we are so happy as to be the people of God, we owe it wholly to his goodness, and to the free and gracious choice he has been pleased to make of us.

II. We here see that the *Jews*, notwithstanding the love which God had expressed towards them, did not honour him as they ought. This God complains of, when he says, *a son honoureth his father, and a servant his master; if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear?* These words teach us, that they, who return the divine love only with disobedience, are guilty of foul ingratitude; and that it is in vain to call God our Father and our Lord, if we do not render him the fear and honour which are due to him.

III. Those who are called to the holy ministry, ought to discharge it in such a manner, that God may not have occasion to reproach them, as he did the *Jewish* priests, with dishonouring his name, and rendering his service contemptible.

IV. The prophet complains, that the *Jews*, out of a principle of covetousness, brought into the temple unsuitable offerings, and presented only things of the smallest value; which God looked upon as sacrilege and impiety. This should make us shun covetousness, and excite us to act sincerely, and after the

the most perfect manner, in all things that concern the glory of God and his service. Lastly, *Malachi* foretels, that the name of God should be great among all nations, and that in all places incense and pure oblations should be offered to his name. This prophecy signified, that the name of God would be made known throughout the world, by the preaching of the Gospel; and is to be understood of the worship that would be paid among all nations, after the manifestation of the Messiah. This engages us to discharge these just duties, by offering always to God such spiritual sacrifices as he will accept through *Jesus Christ* our Lord.

CHAP. II.

THIS chapter consists of two parts: I. God reproves the negligence and impiety of the priests, who, instead of having at heart the glory of God, and faithfully instructing the *Jews*, as their function obliged them, dishonoured their ministry, rendered the divine service contemptible, and caused the people to sin; for which he threatens them with his curses. II. God complains, that the *Jews* had married idolatrous women, contrary to the law; and that they violated the sacred laws of marriage, by divorces, and by unlawful marriages.

REFLECTIONS.

THE first part of this chapter directly relates to the ministers of religion, teaching them that they are appointed to procure the glory of God, to be the guides of the people, and to instruct them faithfully, both by their doctrine and example; that when they are wanting in their duty, religion is despised, divine service is profaned, the people corrupted, and they themselves fall into contempt, and become the objects of the curse of God. The pastors and governors of the church, ought to have these reflections continually before their eyes. The second part of this chapter contains very important directions about marriage. Here we see that

that God is offended when the sacred laws of marriage are broken, either by divorces, or by polygamy, or in any other manner whatever, as well as when we marry persons guilty of idolatry. *Malachi* shews, that all these disorders are contrary to the first institution of marriage, since God created but one man and one woman at the beginning; and this point *Jesus Christ* settles still more plainly in the Gospel, where he proves, by the first institution made by God after the creation, that marriage is a holy state, and an indissoluble bond, which equally binds the wife and the husband. Therefore this state ought to be respected, and preserved in its purity among Christians.

CHAP. III.

HERE are three things to be observed: I. The prophet foretels, that God would soon send *John* the Baptist, and that then the Messiah should come to purify his church, by establishing the true service of God, and by punishing the wicked. II. He severely rebukes the impiety of the *Jews*, and the sacrilege they committed in their tithes and offerings. III. He refutes the blasphemies of those profane persons, who gave out that men serve God in vain; and he says, that God never fails to reward those that fear him, and to distinguish them from the ungodly.

REFLECTIONS.

I. **THIS** prophecy expressly shews, that God was shortly to send a prophet, who is here called the Angel, or Messenger of the Lord; after which the Lord, whom the *Jews* expected, should enter into his temple. Our Lord *Jesus Christ* explains this prophecy in the eleventh chapter of St. *Matthew*, and declares, that *John* Baptist is that messenger who was to come. It is evident this prediction has been accomplished, since it foretold, that the Messiah should come while the temple at *Jerusalem* was standing; for that temple being destroyed, there is no ambiguity in this prophecy,
and

and we cannot doubt but that *Jesus* is the Messiah promised to the *Jews*. II. This prophecy shews, that the design of the coming of *Jesus Christ* was to sanctify his church, and to make believers so many Priests and Levites; that is, persons dedicated to the service of God. This is a powerful motive to Christians to behave agreeably to their holy calling, by devoting themselves to God, and by the purity of their lives. III. *Malachi's* reproach of the *Jews* for their sins, and particularly for their sacrilege, and their contempt of the divine service, is an argument to prove, that God would have men respect every thing that belongs to religion, and in particular, that it is a great sin to apply to any other purpose things that are devoted to holy uses. IV. Let us learn likewise from hence, to detest prophane speeches and sentiments; and, above all, to abhor the impiety of those who affirm, that it is in vain to fear God and to keep his commandments. The Lord here very expressly declares, that he knows those that fear him and reverence his name; that he will remember them and their pious behaviour, and will always make a just difference between the righteous and the wicked.

CHAP. IV.

MALACHI foretels the coming of the day of God's vengeance, and the destruction of the ungodly, under the emblem of fire, which consumes all things: and says, it would be preceded by the coming of the Messiah, whom he calls the Sun of Righteousness, and by the coming of *John Baptist*, to whom he gives the name of *Elijah*, and whose office and ministry he describes.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS last chapter of *Malachi* takes notice of three considerable events. The first is the vengeance which God purposed to exercise against the ungodly. This prophecy expresses what befel the unbelieving *Jews* soon

soon after the coming of *Jesus Christ*, when they were destroyed with their city and temple. The second is, the manifestation of the Messiah, who is here called the Sun of Righteousness, with healing on his wings. The third is the coming of *John Baptist*, to whom *Malachi* gives the name of *Elijah* the prophet, because he was to resemble *Elijah* in his manner of living, in his zeal, and in the nature of his office. We find in the Gospel, that this is the true sense of this prophecy, our Lord having expressly told us, that *John Baptist* was the *Elijah* that was to come. These several predictions are so many proofs which confirm the divine authority of the holy Scriptures, the truth of the Christian religion, the certainty of the promises and threatenings of the Gospel, and the necessity of practising all that is therein commanded. This is also the design of all the prophecies, and of all the Books of the Old Testament, and the use to which they ought to be applied.

The end of the Canonical Books of the Old Testament.

THE
ARGUMENTS
OF THE
BOOKS AND CHAPTERS
OF THE
NEW TESTAMENT,
WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

THE
ANALYST

DOES AND SAYS

NEW TESTAMENT

WITH THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

TO HER
ROYAL HIGHNESS
THE
PRINCESS ANNE, &c.

MADAM,

THE Treatise which I presume to lay at the feet of your Royal Highness, consists of an enumeration of the Arguments of the Books and Chapters in the NEW TESTAMENT, accompanied with theological and moral Reflections upon all of them. It was compiled by that eminent Divine, Mr. *Ostervald*, at the request of a SOCIETY, that has distinguished itself by the most worthy of all purposes, the endeavour of PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE. The work could hardly have a greater recommendation than that of such an Assembly; but I can name a still higher advantage to it, the approbation of your illustrious Mother.

THAT

THAT it may be useful to your Highness and your Sisters, by forwarding you in the imitation of her Christian and Royal virtues and accomplishments, is the most sincere and constant prayer of,

MADAM,

YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS'S

MOST HUMBLE, AND

MOST OBEDIENT SERVANT,

JOHN CHAMBERLAYNE.

THE
G O S P E L
ACCORDING TO
ST. MATTHEW.

ARGUMENT.

We have in the Gospels the history of our Lord's life, death, and resurrection, and his ascension into heaven. It is the duty of every Christian to read and hear these divine Books with serious attention and profound reverence; to meditate on them day and night; and to make a right use of the instructions contained in them.—The first of the Four Gospels, which is that of the apostle St. Matthew, is thought to have been written about eight years after our Lord's ascension.

CHAP. I.

THIS chapter contains, I. The genealogy of *Jesus Christ*, from *Abraham* to *Joseph*, the husband of the Blessed Virgin. II. A short relation of the conception and birth of our Lord.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

THE genealogy of *Jesus Christ*, which is recited in the first chapter of *St. Matthew*, shews that he is descended from the patriarch *Abraham* and from king *David*, as was foretold by the prophets. And the history

history of his conception and birth teaches us, that he was born of the virgin *Mary*, after a wonderful manner, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, according to the prediction of the prophet *Isaiah*. Both our Lord's genealogy, and the manner of his conception and birth, prove him to be the Messiah whom God had promised to send; and that in him the promises of God, and the prophecies of the Old Testament, had their accomplishment: This engages us to receive him as our Saviour, to submit to his doctrine, and to render thanks to God for giving us his only Son for our Redeemer, *who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh*, Rom. i. 3. and *who is over all, God blessed for ever*. Amen. Rom. ix. 5.

CHAP. II.

THIS chapter contains four things: I. The arrival of the Magi that came to worship *Jesus* after his birth. These Magi were men of great learning and high rank, who came from *Arabia*, or some other country lying to the east of *Judea*. II. The retreat of *Joseph* and *Mary*, who fled into *Egypt* with the child *Jesus*, to avoid the rage of *Herod*. III. The slaughter of the children of *Bethlehem*, whom *Herod* caused to be murdered, thinking to destroy our Lord among them. IV. The return of *Joseph* and *Mary* to *Judea*, after the death of *Herod*.

REFLECTIONS.

THESE are the observations that may be made upon this chapter: I. The first is, that the wise men came to worship *Jesus* after his birth, being guided by a miraculous star, which God caused to appear; to which, no doubt, was added some kind of revelation from heaven: God was pleased thereby to render that birth illustrious, and to shew the dignity of the person of our Lord, and inform the *Jews*, that the Messiah, whom they expected, was going to make his appearance; and it likewise denoted, that the Gentiles would soon be admitted

admitted into covenant with God. II. *Herod's* consulting the chief priests and scribes, and the answer they made, prove, that the Messiah was expected at that time; and that *Bethlehem*, it was thought, would be the place of his birth. III. The homage which these wise men of the east paid to the child *Jesus*, falling down before him, and presenting unto him their gift, should excite us, who know he is our God and our Saviour, to worship him, love and praise him, and to devote to him all that is in our power. IV. We see, in the behaviour of *Herod* towards the wise men, and in the massacre which he made of the children of *Bethlehem*, the craft and cruelty of that prince, who neglected no possible means to destroy the child *Jesus*: And thus was our Lord exposed, even from his birth, to great perils; which shewed, from the very first, that his kingdom was not of this world, and that he was born to suffer. We may likewise take notice, that God, by the warning which he gave to the wise men, and afterwards to *Joseph*, defeated *Herod's* designs, and that all the measures which that unjust and cruel prince had taken to destroy *Jesus*, as effectual as he thought them, and as they appeared to be, could not procure our Lord's death, nor prevent his returning into *Judea*, where he afterwards exercised his ministry. All these events may convince us, that Providence did direct, in a particular manner, all that happened to *Jesus Christ*; and that the utmost endeavours of men can never hinder the execution of what God has purposed, nor hurt those whom he protects.

CHAP. III.

THIS chapter consists of two parts: I. In the first, mention is made of the preaching and ministry of *John* the Baptist; and, II. In the second, the Evangelist relates the history of the baptism of our Lord.

REFLECTIONS.

LET us observe in general, upon the first part of this chapter, that before the appearance of *Jesus Christ*, *John* the Baptist, as the prophets had foretold, was sent from God to declare to the *Jews* the coming of the Messiah, and to exhort them to repentance; by which God was pleased to teach them, that the time for the manifestation of the Messiah's kingdom was come; but that it would be a spiritual and heavenly, not a temporal or worldly kingdom, as they imagined. With the same view, *John* the Baptist assured the *Jews*. that their descending from the patriarch *Abraham* was a privilege which would by no means secure them from the divine vengeance that was ready to fall upon that nation because of their unbelief; and that God would call other nations in their stead, to become, by faith, children of *Abraham*. In short, he gave them to understand, that *Jesus* was going to appear, and that it was he who should execute the judgments of God upon the impenitent and unbelieving, and gloriously reward the righteous. Thus God, in his wisdom, was willing to prepare the *Jews* for receiving *Jesus Christ*, and remove those prejudices concerning the kingdom of the Messiah, which might have hindered their believing in him. From the preaching of *John* the Baptist we may learn, that repentance and holiness of life is a qualification, without which no one can be the disciple of *Jesus Christ*, nor enter into the kingdom of God. It likewise informs us, that as the unbelieving *Jews* vainly boasted that they were the children of *Abraham*, it is no advantage to hypocrites to be externally in covenant with God: that *Jesus Christ* knows them, and that he will one day cleanse his church, by casting the wicked into everlasting fire, and by receiving the true believers into his kingdom. As to the baptism of our Lord, it must be observed, that when he was entering upon the discharge of his office, he was baptized by St. *John*, his forerunner; that upon this occasion the Holy Ghost descended upon

upon him in a visible manner, and that God caused a voice to be heard from heaven, whereby he declared that *Jesus* was his beloved Son. God was pleased that all these things should happen, to convince *John* the Baptist, and all the people, that *Jesus* was the promised Messiah. Thus the history of his baptism obliges us to consider him as the Son of God, and to pay him unreserved obedience. It likewise engages us to reverence the baptism we have received, and by which we have been dedicated to God, made his children, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven.

CHAP. IV.

ST. *Matthew* here relates, I. The history of the temptation of *Jesus Christ*. II. The manner in which he began to exercise his ministry in *Galilee*, by declaring that the kingdom of God was come, by chusing apostles, and by working miracles.

REFLECTIONS.

IT may be observed in general upon the history of the temptation, that the design of the devil in tempting our Lord was to try whether *Jesus* was the Son of God; and that it pleased God to suffer this temptation, that the devil, convinced of that truth, might reverence the power of *Jesus Christ*; and that it might appear, that our Lord was come into the world to destroy the kingdom of Satan. Let it also be considered, that if *Jesus Christ* himself was tempted, we should not be surprized if we also are exposed to various temptations; and that we ought, in imitation of our Lord, to resist temptation, and particularly such as might lead us into distrust, or presumption, or make us grow fond of the honours or riches of this world; or lastly, such as may any way tend to draw us off from the true service of God, and from that allegiance we owe him. And the method which *Christ* made use of to repel the temptations of Satan, by quoting the Holy Scriptures, shews us, that it is by the word of God that we

may defeat temptations, and quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. Three things are to be observed in the latter part of this chapter: First, that *Jesus Christ* began to exercise his ministry in *Galilee*, by preaching repentance, as *John Baptist* had done. This should convince us more and more, that holiness of life is the great end of the Gospel which *Christ* preached, and what he principally requires of his disciples. II. Our Lord's making choice of fishermen for his apostles proves, that the wonderful success of their preaching afterwards did not proceed from themselves, but ought wholly to be ascribed to God, who endowed them with his gifts. Lastly, the wonderful cures by which *Jesus* made himself known at first, tended to shew, that he was sent from God, that his doctrine was from above, and that he came into the world only for the good and salvation of mankind.

CHAP. V. 1—20.

THIS chapter, together with the two following, contains *Christ's* sermon upon the mount. In the beginning of this sermon our Lord does two things: I. He teaches us what those dispositions are without which we cannot be truly happy. II. What obligation his disciples are under to live a strictly holy life.

REFLECTIONS.

OUR Lord's design in this discourse, contained in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of *St. Matthew*, in general is to instruct his disciples in the chief duties of the christian life; for which reason we ought to read and hear it with great attention, and to regulate our behaviour by the divine precepts we find in it. Two things are to be considered in the first part of this chapter: I. The beatitudes teach us wherein the true happiness of man consists, and how to distinguish the true disciples of *Christ*, whose character it is not to set their hearts upon the riches, pleasures, or honours of this world, but to be unconcerned about earthly things;

to live in meekness, humility, holiness, and peace; to desire ardently, and, above all things, to be holy and to please God, and even joyfully to undergo persecution for the sake of the Gospel. II. *Jesus Christ* has taught us, that his disciples are the salt of the earth and the light of the world: that is, that they ought to distinguish themselves from other men by the purity of their lives, and endeavour to enlighten and edify them by their instructions and good examples. He has expressly declared, that he was so far from coming into the world to dispense with the observation of the law of God, that on the contrary, he came to lay men under still greater obligations to fulfil it in the most perfect manner. Lastly, He declares he will not admit into his kingdom any who had not attained to a greater perfection in righteousness and holiness than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, who were esteemed among the *Jews* men of the greatest knowledge and holiness. All these precepts of our Lord should make us sensible of the indispensable obligation we lie under to study to lead a holy life, and to aspire after the highest degree of perfection we can possibly attain.

CHAP. V. 21—48.

JESUS CHRIST, to shew that his disciples are called to great holiness, teaches them, that it is not sufficient to abstain from notorious crimes, and such as are expressly condemned in the law of God, but also, that those sins which appear less considerable are to be avoided, and, above all, the motions of the heart to be regulated. He instances in the commandments concerning murder, adultery, oaths, revenge, and the love of our neighbours. He corrects the false interpretations which the *Jews* put upon those commandments, and gives us the true sense and meaning of them.

REFLECTIONS.

THE explanation which our Lord gives of the chief commandments of the law, teaches us, that God prohibits

libits and punishes not only the great and crying sins mentioned in the Decalogue, but that he likewise condemns and punishes us for evil thoughts and evil desires, which the *Jewish* doctors considered only as light faults. Besides this general and very important lesson, *Christ* instructs us in these four particular duties : I. That anger, and all terms of reproach and contempt, which proceed from hatred of our neighbour, subject us to condemnation, as well as murder ; that, far from hating any one, we ought to labour to have peace with all men ; and that we should not present ourselves before God, and offer him our prayers, without doing all that lies in our power to be reconciled to those that have any thing against us. II. The second duty relates to purity and chastity : Our Lord teaches us, that impure desires render us guilty before God, as well as adultery and other acts of uncleanness ; that in order to be chaste, we must watch over ourselves, mortify our senses, pluck out an eye, cut off a hand or foot ; that is, mortify ourselves and renounce every thing though most dear and agreeable to us, if it be an occasion of falling. He likewise teaches us, that the marriage engagement cannot be dissolved but by adultery, which shews what obligation Christians are under to chastity. III. The third instruction relates to swearing : The doctrine of the Son of God upon this point is, that it is not sufficient to avoid perjury, which is a very great crime, but that we ought likewise to be scrupulous in breaking oaths, though not made by the name of God, and entirely to abstain from vain and rash oaths, of what kind soever they be, since they are forbid by the law of *Jesus Christ*, and contrary to that reverence that is due to the Divinity. IV. The fourth duty is that of charity, and the love of our neighbour : What *Christ* commands upon that head is, to abstain from revenge, to bear injuries rather than to return evil for evil ; to give up our right for peace sake, and to avoid disputes ; to love all men, even those that hate us, therein imitating our heavenly Father, who does good to all, even to the wicked and ungrateful ;

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This is the law of the Gospel, and of true charity, and in the practice of all these duties, we shall find our perfection and glory.

CHAP. VI.

OUR Lord instructs his disciples in the duties of alms, prayer, and fasting; shews them how to discharge these religious acts, and exhorts them, above all, to avoid hypocrisy and ostentation. II. He forbids them to take pains to heap up worldly riches, or to be solicitous for the good things of this life; exhorts them to depend upon Providence, and before all things to seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter the Saviour of the world teaches us, I. That alms, prayer, and fasting, are three very important duties of religion; and as to fasting, in particular, it evidently appears, that since *Christ* has prescribed rules for the manner of fasting, as well as for prayer and alms, his design was, that his disciples should fast; private fasts, which are here meant, being very useful to mortify the flesh, and to dispose us for humiliation and prayer; and having been likewise practised by the apostles, and since their time by Christians in general throughout the world. II. Our Saviour commands us carefully to avoid hypocrisy and vain-glory in giving alms, in prayer, and fasting; and to discharge these duties with sincerity and humility, remembering that we are in the presence of God, to whom all the secrets of our hearts are exposed, and that hypocrites have no reward to expect from him. III. Since the Lord's Prayer was composed by *Jesus Christ* himself, and comprehends all that is necessary for the glory of God and our own happiness, the use we are to make of it is, To offer it up to God with the greatest reverence, fervency and devotion; and in the second place, to adapt, not only our prayers, but likewise our thoughts and behaviour to that excellent pattern

tern which *Christ* has left us. IV. Our Lord has declared most expressly, that we must not expect God should hear and pardon us, if we do not likewise pardon all those that have offended us; ; we ought therefore to examine ourselves very strictly on this head, before we offer up our prayers to God. V. The fifth lesson which we learn from this chapter is, not eagerly to pursue the treasures of this world, which are vain and uncertain, and which many accidents may deprive us of; but rather to labour after the heavenly treasure, which is in its own nature most excellent, and which nothing can take from us. To this end he represents the danger of loving riches, because such love blinds us, and engages our affections to the earth, and makes it impossible to lift up our hearts to God, to love and serve him, whilst the love of this world has possession of our hearts. VI. Our Lord does not only forbid us to love riches, but even commands us not to be uneasy, or too solicitous even for the necessities of life, exhorting us to trust in the providence of God, who, as he takes care for birds and other creatures, will much more provide for the wants of his own children, who are of a more excellent nature, and designed for immortality.

Our Saviour condemns those worldly cares which are excessive, and attended with uneasiness and distrust, because such cares are unprofitable, and unworthy of Christians. Lastly, He exhorts us to endeavour, above all things, to please God, and to attain the kingdom of heaven; promising us, that if we do so, God will grant us all things necessary for the support of the body. Let us imprint in our minds these divine lessons; let them always be present to us in the midst of our worldly concerns, to secure us from too strict an union with them, and engage us chiefly to seek after that never-failing treasure which is reserved in heaven for us.

CHAP. VII.

OUR Lord discourses here of rash judgment; of prudence in proposing truth; of prayer and its efficacy; he prescribes rules of justice and charity; exhorts us to enter in at the strait gate, and to avoid false teachers. He declares, that all who call him Lord will not enter into the kingdom of heaven; and shews by a parable, that it is in vain to hear his word, if we do not practise it.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter contains several weighty instructions. I. The first is, not to judge rashly of our neighbour, nor to blame him with too great severity; to acknowledge our own faults, and amend them, rather than pry too curiously into and reprove the faults of other men. II. The second is, not to give that which is holy unto dogs: This is a prudential advice, the meaning of which is, That when we have to do with carnal and profane men, who proudly and contemptuously reject the doctrine of the Gospel, we ought not to offer it to them, for fear of exposing religion to their hatred and contempt. III. Our Lord exhorts us to pray to God with confidence, assuring us, that prayer is of very great efficacy, provided it be attended with zeal and perseverance, and that we ask of God those things that are really good; this he shews by the comparison between God and our natural parents, who never deny their children the things that are necessary for them. IV. He gives us here a rule of justice and charity, which is, to do to others as we would have them do to us; this most perfect, and at the same time most plain and easy rule, we ought always to have before our eyes. V. He exhorts his disciples to enter in at the strait gate; that is, to follow that faith and piety which leads to salvation, though few people walk in that way, and it be contrary to human passions and inclinations, and even though

though it should sometimes expose us to persecution; and he commands us to avoid the paths of error and vice, which seem agreeable to flesh and blood; a way in which many people walk, but which leads to destruction. VI. Our Lord bids his disciples beware of impostors and false teachers, which would be very numerous afterwards. The rule he gives is, to judge of them by their fruits; that is, by their works and behaviour, and by the natural effects of their doctrine, taking notice whether it tended to the glory of God, and to make mankind better. VII. After that he declares, that all who profess his religion, and call him their Lord, shall not enter into heaven; that he will receive into it none but such as perform his will; and that many who have known him, and have even wrought miracles in his name, shall be shut out of his kingdom, because they have not kept his commandments. VIII. Lastly, He concludes this discourse by the comparison of a house founded upon a rock, with one built upon the sand; by which he shews, that it is in vain to hear his word, if we do not observe that which he commands; and that those who fail in this essential duty, can never persevere, nor resist temptation. By this similitude we are taught what use to make of the Gospel, and particularly of the instructions contained in this and the two foregoing chapters.

CHAP. VIII. 1—17.

ST. *Matthew* relates several miracles of *Jesus Christ*.

I. The healing of a leper. II. That of the servant of a Gentile captain. III. That of St. *Peter's* mother-in-law, and several other diseased people.

REFLECTIONS.

AS this chapter begins the history of our Saviour's miracles, the first observation we shall make relates to those miracles in general; in which we discover, I. The infinite power of our Lord, which appeared in his healing all kinds of diseases by his word only. II. His
goodness

goodness and love towards men, those miracles being nothing else but acts of beneficence. III. We are to consider the design of these miracles, which was to convince men, that *Jesus* was sent from God, and to engage them to hear him, and believe in him; for which reason the miracles he wrought were commonly for the sake of such as believed he was able to do them. Besides these general reflections, which ought always to be remembered when we read the Gospel, it is to be observed, that in the cure of the leper our Lord had respect to his faith and prayer; whereby we may see, that he saves and delivers those who have recourse to him with an humble confidence. Further, *Jesus Christ* ordered the leper to go and shew himself to the high priest, and offer what was commanded by the law, to convince the *Jews* that he was quite cured, and that they might not accuse him of being an enemy to the law of *Moses*. The history of the centurion, who entreated our Lord to heal his servant, is particularly remarkable for the profound humility and surprising faith of that man, who did not think himself worthy to receive *Christ* into his house; and was persuaded, that without coming to him our Lord needed only to say the word, and the servant would be healed with as much ease as he, being an officer, could command the soldiers under him to obey him. Our Lord's great commendation of the faith of that officer, (who was born a heathen,) saying that he had not found such great faith even among the *Jews*, obliges us to take great notice of that example, and to imitate the faith and humility of the centurion. *Jesus* foretold, upon this occasion, that many should come from the east, and from the west, and sit down in the kingdom of heaven, when the children of the kingdom should be cast out; which was as much as to say, That the Gentiles, from the several parts of the world, should be admitted into covenant with God, and the *Jews* rejected, as was soon after verified by the event. Lastly, St. *Matthew's* applying that prophecy of *Isaiah*, *He has borne our*
griefs

griefs and carried our sorrows, to our Lord, after his healing St. Peter's mother-in-law, and several others, teaches us what was the end of all these miracles; they were designed to prove that *Jesus* was a kind and compassionate Saviour, and that he only came into the world to do good to mankind; to deliver them from all their miseries, and chiefly from their sins.

CHAP. VIII. 18—34.

THE latter part of this chapter contains three things.

I. Our Saviour's reply to one of the Scribes, and to a disciple that desired to follow him. II. The stilling a tempest. III. The cure of two men possessed with devils.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE answer which *Jesus Christ* returned to a Scribe that was desirous to follow him, tended to make him sensible, that he was not to expect worldly advantages in his service; and his bidding one of his disciples *leave the dead to bury their dead*, signified, that he ought to leave the care of temporal things to those that were not enlightened with the Gospel, and that those whom he called to be his disciples should follow him without delay, and be ready to forsake every thing, and to renounce the things of this life, even such as are lawful and innocent, when they hinder them from discharging the duties of their calling. II. In our Saviour's miracle of laying the storm, we may observe, on one hand, his power in calming the wind and the sea by his word only; and on the other, the weakness of the apostles, who were afraid of sinking. This event, which tended to confirm their faith, ought to strengthen ours, and fill us with an entire confidence in the power and goodness of *Jesus Christ*. We may be entirely secure, even in the midst of the greatest dangers, when we are beloved by him, and have him for our protector. III. The history of those demoniacs whom our Saviour healed, shews us, that
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the devil did then exercise his power over men, but that *Christ* was come to take away that power from him, and to destroy his kingdom. As to what happened to the herd of swine, which ran headlong into the sea, after the devils had entered into them by the permission of our Lord, it must be considered, that he was pleased by this loss to try and punish the inhabitants of that country, and to shew, that the men whom he had healed were really possessed; that he had power over devils, and that those evil spirits could do nothing without his permission; and the whole may serve to convince men of the power of *Jesus Christ*, to inform them of the end of his coming into the world, and fully to persuade them of the truth of his doctrine.

CHAP. IX.

THIS chapter contains: I. The cure of a man that had the palsy. II. The calling of St. *Matthew* to the office of an apostle; and *Christ*'s answer to those that were offended at his eating with sinners. III. His reply to the disciples of *John* the Baptist, when they asked him, why his disciples did not fast as well as they? IV. The cure of a woman that had an issue of blood. V. The raising to life the ruler's daughter. VI. The giving sight to two blind men, and delivering the dumb man possessed with a devil. Lastly, Our Lord's exhortation to his disciples, to pray that God would send men to labour in the conversion of the people.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THERE may be two reflections made upon the healing the paralytic. The first, That our Lord had regard to the faith of that man, and of those that presented him; which shews, that it is by faith, and by an humble recourse to *Jesus Christ*, that we partake of the effects of his grace. The second, That since *Jesus Christ* had not only power to heal the sick, but likewise

likewise authority to forgive sin; we should look on him as our judge, and by faith and repentance dispose ourselves to receive from him remission of our sins.

II. The answer our Lord returned to those that found fault at his eating with publicans, and other men of bad life, teaches us, that he came into the world to save sinners, but that the end of his coming was likewise to call them to repentance; and therefore without amendment and holiness of life we cannot be saved.

III. If *Jesus Christ* did not oblige his disciples, to regular, set fasts, like those of *John's* disciples, it was not because his doctrine on this point differed from that of his forerunner, or because he condemned fasting, which he recommended both by example and precept, and by calling them to a life of mortification, not of ease and pleasure: but he acted thus for the same reason that he himself did not lead as retired and austere a life as *John* the Baptist; that is, because the nature of his ministry obliged him to go from place to place, and to converse with all sorts of people.

However, he declares that his disciples should afterwards be called, not only to fasting, but to the severest trials; and that if he did not expose them to those severities while he was with them, it was because they were not able to bear them; this he represents in the comparisons of the old garment, and old wine vessels.

IV. The healing of a woman that had been diseased with a flux of blood twelve years, shews, that our Lord cured the most inveterate and incurable distempers; but above all, we ought to observe the humility and faith of that woman, who, not daring to speak to *Christ*, believed that if she could only touch his garment she should be whole, which accordingly came to pass. This example shews us, that our Lord has respect to humility and faith, and that the infallible means of obtaining his favour, is to have recourse to him with profound humility, and an entire confidence.

V. The raising of the daughter of *Jairus*, proves that *Jesus Christ* had not only power to heal the sick, but that he could even restore life to the dead; which

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ought fully to convince us that he was sent from God, and confirm us in the belief and expectation of our own resurrection. VI. It is observed at the end of this chapter, that our Saviour seeing the people which followed him in great need of instruction and good guides, took pity on them, and bid his disciples *Pray the Lord of the harvest to send labourers into his harvest*. These words, which express the great love of our Saviour, should inspire us with the same sentiments of compassion and kindness to those that wander out of the way; and stir us up to beseech God that he would send faithful ministers, and bless their labours in the conversion of men, and establishment of his kingdom.

CHAP. X.

WE see in this chapter: I. The calling and the names of the twelve apostles. II. The commands which our Lord gave them when he sent them the first time into *Judea*, to declare that the kingdom of God was come. He foretels them that great troubles should arise in the world on account of the Gospel, and that they should be persecuted; but to encourage them, he assured them of the divine protection and assistance; sets before them his own example; exhorts them not to fear men, but God only; and declares what will happen to those who confess or who deny him before men. Lastly, He promises to reward those who shall receive his disciples, and do them good.

REFLECTIONS.

JESUS CHRIST chose the apostles to be the witnesses of his life, his preaching, and his miracles, and that they themselves might also go and preach the Gospel, and work miracles, first among the *Jews*, and afterwards throughout the world. Now since our Lord made choice of them, and God has been pleased to preserve their names in the sacred writings, their memory ought to be blessed in the church; we ought to imitate their virtues, and submit to the doctrine which

which they taught, as well by word of mouth as in their writings. II. *Jesus Christ* forbad his apostles to go at that time among the Gentiles, or to the *Samaritans*, and commanded them to preach the Gospel to the *Jews* only, because the time was not yet come that the apostles should go into all parts of the world. For the same reason he bade them make no provision for their journey, it being not necessary then, because they were not to go far off, and that their journies were to be but short, the design of this first mission being only to spread among the *Jews*, with greater expedition, the news of the coming of the kingdom of God: Another reason was, by this means to teach them to depend upon Providence. III. In the instructions which our Lord gave his apostles, we learn, that those who preach the Gospel ought to do it with great disinterestedness, prudence, zeal, and boldness; without fearing men, or death itself. IV. We learn that his doctrine is received by none but those who have a true heart, and who are of a meek and quiet spirit; that it is to persons of this character that the ministers of the Gospel should apply themselves; but when they meet with people who will not hear nor receive them, they should leave them; and that those who thus reject the offers of God's grace, shall be most severely punished. V. In this discourse of our Lord, we have a strong proof of the divinity of the Christian Religion, since the apostles who preached it, and those who first embraced it, were exposed to divers persecutions, and sealed the truth of the Gospel, and the sincerity of their own testimony, with their blood. VI. We may make here several useful reflections, whereof these are the chief: That those who make profession of truth and piety, do often expose themselves to hatred and persecution, but that God assists them in a wonderful manner; that we should not fear men, who can only hurt our body, but God alone, who can cast both body and soul into hell; that troubles and divisions often arise in the world on account of the Gospel, but that this is entirely owing to

to the faults of men; that Christians ought to be ready to renounce all that is dearest to them in this world, to follow *Jesus Christ*. And lastly, That our Lord will abundantly recompence the piety and charity of those that shall receive and assist his disciples. All these considerations serve to encourage us stedfastly and openly to profess the Christian Religion; to practise all its duties, and particularly to exercise works of charity with pleasure and perseverance.

CHAP. XI.

I. *JOHN* the Baptist having sent two of his disciples to *Jesus Christ*, to know of him whether he were the Messiah, our Lord shews that he was so, by working miracles before them. II. He speaks of the nature and excellence of the office of *John* the Baptist. III. He complains of the obstinacy of the *Jews*, who had made no improvement either by the ministry of *John* the Baptist, or his own; and threatens the cities of *Galilee*, where he had preached and done miracles, without producing in them repentance and amendment. IV. He praises God that such as were of a meek and humble spirit did receive his doctrine, whilst those who passed in the world for the wisest and most knowing rejected it; and he invites all those that were weary and heavy laden to come unto him.

REFLECTIONS.

TO make a right use of the reading of this chapter we must observe, I. That if *John* the Baptist sent to inquire of our Lord whether he was the Messiah, it was not that he doubted of it: this would be a gross reflection upon that holy man, who had constantly declared that *Jesus* was the Son of God, and of whom our Lord in the Gospel, and even in this chapter, gives us a most extraordinary character. But *John* the Baptist sent his disciples to convince them that *Jesus* was he whom the *Jews* expected. II. However, our Lord would not tell them plainly that he was the

Messiah, but contented himself to prove by miracles that he was so, and to warn them not to be offended if he appeared in a very mean condition. III. It was with the same design that he made those who heard him take notice, that when they went to *John* the Baptist in the wilderness, it was not to see a reed shaken with the wind; meaning that they went not upon an occasion of very little importance, or to see a very inconsiderable person; neither was it a man that was to appear with pomp and splendor, like those we meet with in kings palaces, but that they had seen in the person of *John* the Baptist a great prophet, and even the greatest of prophets, since he was the forerunner of the Messiah; and that nevertheless people opposed him, and the kingdom of God which he preached, ever since he began to appear. *Christ* told them all this, to shew that his kingdom was not of this world, and that they ought not to be surprised if he himself appeared in so low and abject a condition, and even though he were rejected. IV. Our Lord's complaint against the *Jews*, who had profited neither by the preaching of *John* the Baptist nor his own; objecting that the life of the former was too strict, and that of the latter not strict enough, may convince us that nothing can satisfy unbelieving and vicious men, who reject all the means God makes use of for their conviction, and even take occasion from thence to harden themselves yet more. V. The threatenings which our Lord denounced against those cities where he had worked miracles, and they did not repent, is a warning to us, that those people who receive the greatest favours from God, having the Gospel preached among them, and they do not grow better, shall be punished with the utmost severity. VI. Our Saviour's giving thanks to God, because the mean and humble had received his doctrine, whilst it was rejected by the great and wise men of the world, teaches us, that we cannot receive the Gospel without an upright, humble and honest heart, without renouncing worldly glory and false wisdom. Lastly since our Saviour does with
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so much tenderness invite all such as labour and are heavy laden to be his disciples, and assures them that his *yoke is easy, and his burden light*; let us draw near to him with an humble and lively sense of our own misery, and with an ardent desire of being delivered from it; let us chearfully submit to his doctrine and divine precepts; let us be meek and lowly of heart as he was, and then we shall find in him peace of mind, and perfect happiness.

CHAP. XII. 1—21.

I. **O**UR Saviour vindicates his disciples plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath day. II. He cures a man who had a withered hand, and confounds the Pharisees, who were offended at his having wrought that miracle upon the sabbath day. III. He charges the people not to publish his miracles: whereupon St. *Matthew* quotes a prophecy of *Isaiah*, describing the prudence, humility, and meekness, that should appear in the Messiah's manner of exercising his ministry.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are three reflections to be made upon this first part of the twelfth chapter of St. *Matthew*. I. The first relates to the malice and hypocrisy of the Pharisees, who found fault with the disciples for plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath day, and because their master on the sabbath had healed a man with a withered hand. This is the character of hypocrites, and those that have only a false zeal; they are offended at things in their nature innocent, and even sometimes at such as are good, necessary, and acceptable to God, whilst they themselves neglect the most essential duties of religion, and especially that of charity. II. What our Lord says upon this occasion deserves our serious attention, and chiefly these words, *I will have mercy, and not sacrifice*. Let us learn from hence, that religion does not barely consist in things external, and in the observation of ceremonies, that indeed

those things must not be despised or neglected, and have their use when practised in conformity to his will who has appointed them; but that what God requires above all is, that we should obey his commandments, that we should have true charity, and exercise works of mercy. III. The third reflection may be made upon the behaviour of *Jesus Christ*, who forbids the publishing his miracles; and upon these words of *Isaiah*: *He will not quench the smoking flax, nor break intirely the bruised reed.* Here we see the great prudence of our Lord, who avoided every thing that looked like vanity or ostentation; as likewise his humility, meekness, and condescension. We observe particularly, that he discourages nobody, that he bears with the weakness of men with great patience; and while there is any good in us, he does not forsake us. This ought, on one hand, to encourage and make us confide in him; and, on the other, induce us to imitate him; to be humble, meek, and peaceable as he was; to avoid vain-glory, and a desire of praise; to shun quarrels and disputes; to exercise great forbearance towards men; to make allowance for, and condescend to their weaknesses: thus we shall be like *Jesus Christ*, and shew that we are his disciples.

CHAP. XII. 22—50.

- I. *CHRIST* cures a demoniack; and as the Pharisees attributed that miracle to the power of the devil, our Lord shews how false and impious that accusation was; saying, that the devil would not destroy his own kingdom, and that he could not cast out devils, if he had not a greater power than that of devils; he threatened the Pharisees that their blasphemies should never be pardoned, and that their impious discourse was a proof of the extreme wickedness of their hearts. II. Being desired by the Pharisees to shew them a sign, he refused to do it, referring them to the resurrection, which was to be the last and strongest proof of his divine mission; and he laments the unbelief of the
Jews,

Jews, mentioning upon that account the example of the *Ninevites*, that of the queen of *Sheba*, and a parable. III. He declares that his true disciples were as dear to him as his nearest relations.

REFLECTIONS.

WE here find, I. That the Pharisees, instead of acknowledging the divine power, which appeared so evidently in our Saviour's miracles, said, he cast out devils by the power of the devil. We see in this instance, that men blinded by their passions, can resist the most powerful means of conviction. II. Our Lord declares that this blasphemy of the Pharisees, in ascribing to the devil what proceeded from the Spirit of God, should never be forgiven them; because such blasphemy was a sign of their desperate wickedness, and incurable obstinacy. We cannot at this day fall into exactly the same sin as these Pharisees did; but we may become extremely guilty by impious and profane thoughts and expressions, by resisting the truth when made known to us, or by quenching the operations of God's holy Spirit in our hearts. III. From the blasphemy of the Pharisees our Lord took an occasion to declare that good discourses are the signs of a good heart; that wicked discourses proceed from a corrupt heart; and that men must give an account of all the evil words they have spoken. Let us learn from hence, that a good man is known by his words, and that the way to regulate them, is to sanctify our heart. IV. Upon the Pharisees desiring *Christ* to give them a sign, after so many miracles he had already wrought in their sight, we may observe, that unbelievers, and those who have a wicked heart, are never satisfied, and that nothing is clear or strong enough for their conviction. And our Lord's refusing to give them such a sign, shews us, that when God has done all that is necessary to overcome the hardness of men's hearts, if it proves ineffectual, he gives them up to their own obstinate temper. V. If the examples of
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the queen of *Sheba*, and of the *Ninevites*, condemned the unbelieving *Jews*, they will condemn us much more if we do not repent, since God has been more kind to us than he was to them. VI. By the comparison of the evil spirit which entered again into a man after it had gone out, our Lord shewed the miseries that were to befall the *Jews*, who, after all he had done to cure their infidelity, still persisted in it: and it is a warning to us, that those who have been partakers of the grace of God, and make an ill use of it; shall be deprived of it, and shall fall into greater condemnation. Lastly, Our Saviour's declaring that those who do the will of God are as dear to him as his mother and brethren, teaches us, that holiness, and the observation of God's commandments, is the true mark of the disciples of *Jesus*, and is what admits us into a share of his love; that therefore we ought to apply ourselves above all things to hear his word, and keep it. This likewise shews us, that those who love God, and fear him, are the people to whom we ought chiefly to devote our love and esteem.

CHAP. XIII. 1—23.

OUR Lord proposes the parable of the seed, and afterwards explains it in private to his disciples.

REFLECTIONS.

IT is proper to observe in general, upon the parables in this chapter, and in several other places in the Gospel, that our Lord used, in his teaching, to make use of parables and similitudes; and that his disciples and the people might remember them the better, he borrowed them from the plainest and most familiar subjects. These parables were of two kinds. Some were clear, and others somewhat obscure. These last *Jesus Christ* made use of, when he was speaking of some points which his hearers were not at that time able to comprehend, and which he did not think fit to declare openly before his death. Such are the parables

parables which foretold his being put to death, the rejection of the *Jews*, and the calling of the Gentiles in their stead. These truths he represented by images and similitudes, very plain and easy to remember, and which in a short time would, by the event, be made perfectly clear and intelligible. These parables display the great wisdom of our Lord, prove that he foreknew things to come, since most of them were prophetic; and afford us, in their completion, a convincing proof of the divinity of the Gospel. The design of *Jesus Christ* in the parable of the seed is, to teach his disciples how the word of God is received by those to whom it is declared. He speaks of four kinds of persons: The first, are those on whom the word makes no impression, and whose hearts are entirely hardened, which is represented by the seed falling on the way side. The second are those that receive the word with joy, but embracing the Gospel without due reflection, forsake the truth and holiness, as soon as they are exposed to persecution, or some other trial: *Christ* represents the state of such people, by the seed falling in stony places which indeed springs up, but having no root, withers away presently. The third sort of hearers, are those who make the word of God of none effect by the love of riches and pleasures, and by the cares of this life, as seed falling among thorns is choaked and becometh unfruitful. The last are those who receive it in an honest and good heart, where it produces its fruit and its effect, and who persevere to the end; this is represented by the seed sown in good ground, where it brings forth fruit in abundance. This is the meaning and design of this beautiful parable: and it tends to instruct us in the use we are to make of the Gospel when preached to us. What our Saviour said to his disciples when he explained to them this parable, should lead us Christians to acknowledge, how happy we are to be instructed in these divine truths, to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, and to be more enlightened than all the ancient prophets. Let us make a good use of these advantages, lest we fall into
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fin, and into the condemnation of those who see and hear, but will not receive nor understand the truth, and refuse to be converted.

CHAP. XIII. 24—58.

I. *CHRIST* proposes several parables; as the parable of the tares, the grain of mustard-seed, and the leaven of treasure hid in a field, a pearl of great price, and of the net. II. He then exhorts his disciples to make a right use of his instructions, and afterwards goes to *Nazareth*, where few believed on him.

REFLECTIONS.

THE parables of the tares, and of the net, have the same tendency: they signify, according to the explanation our Saviour himself gives of them, that among those who should profess the Gospel, there would be many hypocrites, and that the wicked would be mixed with the good till the end of the world; but that then they shall be separated from each other; that the wicked shall be condemned to everlasting torments, and the righteous received into eternal glory. The use therefore we are to make of these parables is, not to be prejudiced against the Gospel, if we see among Christians some that fall into vice and error; to stand upon our guard, and avoid the company of wicked men, lest we be seduced by them; but, nevertheless, to think always charitably of them; to do our utmost to recover them from their errors; and, as to ourselves, to labour to be of the number of the righteous, that at *Christ's* second coming, we may be admitted into his kingdom. By the similitude of the mustard-seed, and that of leaven, the design of our Lord was to shew, that though the number of his disciples was then but very small, and his doctrine scarce known in the world, yet it should be soon spread over the whole earth. *Christ* foretold this in mystical and hidden expressions; not thinking fit, at that time, to declare openly, for fear of giving offence to the *Jews*, that the Gentiles
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and all nations should come into the church. Thus these parables are prophetic, and their true import and meaning is manifest in the establishment of Christianity in so many parts of the world, as their divine author had foretold. Let us give thanks to God, that this heavenly doctrine has been extended even to us, and let us beseech him, that he would more and more establish his kingdom among us, by sanctifying his church; and that he would call to the knowledge thereof those people who are deprived of it, or who have never embraced it, to the end that the whole earth may be full of his knowledge and of his glory, and that the name of God the Father may be glorified in all places, through *Jesus Christ* our Lord. *Amen.*

The similitudes of the hidden treasure, and of the pearl, may convince us, that there is nothing more precious nor more excellent than the Gospel, and the advantages that attend it; that the greatest happiness which we can enjoy, is to be possessed of those advantages; and therefore, that we ought gladly to improve every opportunity of procuring them, and even to renounce all that is dearest to us in this world to acquire such a precious treasure. Let us carefully retain these divine instructions of our Lord *Jesus Christ*; let us lay them up in our hearts, that they may continually furnish us with necessary supplies and encouragements to resist temptations, and excite us to the love of God and the practice of good works. We may observe, at the end of this chapter, that the inhabitants of *Nazareth* believed not on *Jesus Christ*, though they heard his doctrine, and saw some of his miracles, because they looked upon him as the son of a carpenter, and because he was bred among them; which made our Lord tell them, that no prophet was received in his own country. Men are too apt to slight God's favours, and the most valuable blessings he vouchsafes them, because they are common, and may be easily enjoyed; and therefore God, seeing their ingratitude, deprives

deprives them of them, as it happened to those of *Nazareth*, because of their unbelief.

CHAP. XIV.

ST. *Matthew* relates three things in this chapter.

I. The death of *John* the Baptist. II. *Christ*'s feeding five thousand people with five loaves and two fishes. III. Another miracle of our Lord, who, when his disciples were exposed to a storm, came to them walking upon the sea.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WE may make this general reflection upon the death of *John* the Baptist, namely, that God was pleased to suffer that this holy man, who had preached the coming of the kingdom of God, should die a violent death, to convince the *Jews* that his kingdom was not to be a temporal one; and that they might not be offended when *Christ* himself should be put to death. It may be observed in the next place, that the cause of *John* the Baptist's death, was the zeal of that prophet in reproving *Herod* for his criminal correspondence with *Herodias*; the hatred which that immodest woman had conceived against *John* on that account, and the complaisance *Herod* had for her. The reflections that are to be made upon all this are, That the servants of God ought to rebuke all sorts of persons with courage and zeal, though they often draw upon themselves thereby the hatred of wicked men; that impurity, and the love of pleasures, make people commit many sins; And lastly, that great evils may result from rash oaths, as well as from a false shame, and the complaisance that we have for wicked people. The miracle of the five loaves has this particularity in it, that it was wrought in the presence of several thousand men, who were witnesses, and shared in the benefit of it; which renders this miracle yet more certain, and proves the wonderful power of our Lord, as well as his great goodness towards the people that followed him.

him. Lastly, The other miracle that *Christ* did, when he went to his disciples walking upon the sea, is another proof of his unlimited power, and of his love to his disciples: he was pleased, upon this occasion, to make St. *Peter* walk on the water, to confirm the faith of that apostle and of his brethren: and to assure them that they should afterwards do many extraordinary miracles, and that no danger should terrify them. As to ourselves, we are to make two reflections. First, that if true Christians are exposed to dangers, God comes seasonably to their assistance; and secondly, that as the zeal and faith of St. *Peter* enabled him at first to walk on the water, into which he afterwards sunk through fear; so it is the want of faith only that makes us yield to temptations and dangers, but that we may happily surmount them by faith, and the divine assistance.

CHAP. XV.

I. *CHRIST* vindicates his disciples for not observing the traditions and customs of the *Jews*, who washed their hands before their meals: a ceremony which the *Jews* observed, not for cleanliness only, but as a part of religion, without which they thought they must be unclean. Our Lord reproaches the Pharisees, who were offended at it, with violating themselves the divine law, by their traditions, teaching that if any one devoted to God a part of his estate, where-with he might have relieved his father or mother, it was not lawful for him, after such a vow, to apply it to their assistance. II. In the next place, our Lord shews what it is that defiles a man, and what does not defile him. III. He heals the daughter of a *Canaanitish* woman, and several sick people; and, IV. Feeds four thousand men with seven loaves and a few fishes.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS discourse between *Christ* and the Pharisees, furnishes us with the following instructions: I. That hypocrites

hypocrites make religion and piety to consist only in external duties, and oftentimes in such as are vain and of very small weight; that they scrupulously observe these things, and condemn those that do not, whilst they themselves violate the most important duties, and the most positive commands of God. II. That the duty of children to their parents is altogether inviolable, that nothing can dispense with it, and that they are particularly obliged to assist them in time of need, III. That vows and oaths, which are rash, and contrary to the divine law, ought not to be kept. IV. That God rejects the worship of those who only honour him with their mouths and lips, but whose hearts are far from him; and that he will be served as he has commanded in his word, and not according to the inventions and directions of men. V. That not only external actions defile men, and render them guilty before God, but likewise and chiefly the wicked thoughts and motions of the heart, and desires tending to impurity, to unrighteousness, to pride, to slander, and other sins. This is a doctrine which we must never forget, and which obliges us more particularly to study the internal sanctification and purity of the heart and conscience. VI. We ought to take particular notice of the miracle which *Christ* wrought in healing the daughter of the *Canaanitish* woman. He refused at first to cure her, because her mother was a Gentile; his reason for so doing was, not only by that means to excite the zeal of that woman, but likewise because the time was not yet come in which the Gentiles were to be called; and because, during his stay upon earth, he wrought miracles only among the *Jews*. But seeing her perseverance and great humility, he did at last what she desired of him. By this example we may observe, that prayers made with faith, humility, and perseverance, are very acceptable to God, and very powerful; that if God does not hear us at first, it is to try us, to encourage our zeal, and to render us more sensible of our own unworthiness; but if we continue to call upon him fervently, he grants us at last those
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favours we beg of him. Lastly, This miracle, as well as a great number more which our Lord wrought in healing the sick, in feeding four thousand men with seven loaves and a few fishes, and the like, should lead us to acknowledge the infinite power of *Jesus Christ*, and his exceeding great love towards men; and ought to excite us to praise God at the hearing of so many wonders, and to glorify him, as those did who were eye-witnesses of them.

CHAP. XVI.

THIS chapter has four parts: I. *Christ* refuses to shew a sign, which the Pharisees desired of him, and reproaches them for their blindness. II. He warns his disciples to take heed of the leaven of the Pharisees. III. Having asked the apostles their opinion concerning him, St. *Peter* confesses that he was the *Christ*, the Son of the living God: whereupon our Lord makes him very gracious promises. IV. He foretels his own death: exhorts his disciples to prepare for sufferings; and to engage them so to do, he represents the worth of the soul, and the great importance of securing the salvation of it. He likewise foretels that some of his disciples should not die till his kingdom was established, and he himself come to destroy the *Jews*: which proved true of those disciples who lived till that time, and particularly of St. *John*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE first reflection we ought to make here, relates to the blindness of the Pharisees, who, notwithstanding *Christ* had done so many miracles to convince them that the time of the Messiah's coming was fulfilled, were still urgent with our Lord to shew them a sign, which he very justly refused to do. When God has given sufficient proofs of the truth of the Gospel, if men do not submit to it, they must not expect that God will work continual miracles to overcome their unbelief. II. The meaning of the warning that *Christ* gave

gave his disciples, to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees was, that they should be upon their guard against the doctrine of the Pharisees, who stuck to the outside of religion, and to the traditions; and also against the doctrine of the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, and the immortality of the soul. This is a lesson to us, to avoid, with great care, superstition and hypocrisy, as well as impious and libertine opinions. III. It appears from this chapter, that the *Jews* had a high opinion of *Jesus Christ*; and particularly that the apostles were firmly persuaded that he was the *Christ*, the Son of the living God: this is the great and fundamental truth, which ought to be believed and confessed by Christians before the whole world. IV. The promise that *Christ* made to St. *Peter*, when he said to him, *Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven*; signifies that St. *Peter* would be one of the principal ministers in the establishment of his church; and should first preach the Gospel both to *Jews* and *Gentiles*. V. When we see *Christ* foretelling his death, and severely rebuking St. *Peter*, who (being full of the prejudices of the *Jews*) could not be persuaded that the Messiah was to die, we must consider, that our Lord spake in that sharp manner, not because he did not love the apostle, but more fully to convince him, and all the disciples, that it was necessary he should suffer death; and to shew them he was resolved so to do. VI. The last verses of this chapter furnish us with several instructions of great moment, and particularly these three; 1. That the first thing *Christ* requires of his disciples is, to renounce themselves, and to be prepared for sufferings; and that the desire of preserving our lives should never hinder us from following and obeying him. 2. That the salvation of the soul is the most important thing imaginable; and that it is of no advantage to gain the whole world, if a man loses his own soul. 3. That the Son of God will come with glory

glory from heaven, to render to all according to their works.

CHAP. XVII.

THIS chapter contains, I. The history of the transfiguration of *Jesus Christ*. II. The discourse he had with his apostles about the coming of *Elias* whom the *Jews* expected. III. The casting out a devil, which the apostles could not cast out. IV. A miracle wrought by *Christ* for the payment of the tribute-money, given by the *Jews* for the maintenance of the temple and divine service.

REFLECTIONS.

I. OUR Lord was pleased to be transfigured a little before his death in the presence of three of his apostles, and to shew them his glory, to strengthen their faith, and to fortify them against the scandal which his death might have given them. The appearing of *Moses* and *Elias*, at that time, shews, that *Christ* was he whose coming the prophets had foretold, and that he was greater than the most excellent of the prophets. It proves also, that these holy men were not annihilated, and that therefore there is another life reserved for good men after this. And the voice which God caused to be heard from heaven on this occasion, informs us, that *Jesus Christ* is the Son of God, to whom alone we should hearken, and to whom we owe perfect obedience. II. What *Christ* said to his disciples, that *John* the Baptist was that *Elias*, whose coming the prophets had foretold, should convince us of the dignity of the person of *John* the Baptist, and of the authority of his ministry. In the history of the demoniack, whom the apostles could not cure, we find that *Christ* was invested with a power which nothing could resist, and that he was at the same time full of compassion towards the miserable. We likewise see, that the want of faith in the apostles, was the cause they could not work this miracle; and that,

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on the contrary, the father of that poor creature did by his faith obtain the cure of his son. This shews us, how necessary and how efficacious faith is, and how great reason we have to endeavour to be strengthened in it, since it is not less necessary now for our salvation, than it was formerly to enable to perform or procure miracles. The concern which the apostles shewed when *Christ* foretold his death, is another proof of the weakness of their faith; but we who know that *Christ* died that he might obtain for us everlasting life, ought to consider his death as the foundation of our hopes and our happiness. Lastly, the miraculous manner by which our Lord paid the tribute, is a remarkable effect of his power; he was also pleased to shew thereby that he did not despise the things that concerned religion; and it is an example for us to submit to public order, and to give, without grudging, some portion of our goods, when the service of God and works of piety are concerned.

CHAP. XVIII.

I. **T**HE apostles ask our Lord, which of them should be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. They put this question to him, because they were of the same opinion with the *Jews*, that the kingdom of the Messiah would be established upon earth, and that there would be great offices and places, to be obtained in this kingdom. Our Lord, to undeceive them, places a little child in the midst of them, and exhorts them to become like little children: he advises them not to despise those that believe in him, though they are very mean as to this world. He represents to them the great sin of giving offence to any of the faithful, and that he calls even the greatest sinners to repentance and salvation. This whole discourse of *Jesus Christ* tends to deliver the apostles from those prejudices under which they laboured with respect to the kingdom of the Messiah, and to inspire them with the sentiments of charity and humility. In
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the second part of this chapter, *Christ* teaches his disciples how to behave towards their offending brethren, and what the church is to do to those who refuse to submit to its directions. After this he represents, by a parable, the obligation we are under to forgive one another.

REFLECTIONS.

THE Saviour of the world teaches us in the first part of this chapter, I. That to enter into the kingdom of heaven, we must be extremely humble, and set our hearts no more upon the glories and honours of this world, than little children do. II. That we ought to have a very great regard for the true disciples of *Christ*, though they should be but low and mean among men; that good people are dear to God, and therefore we ought to esteem and comfort them, since he causes his holy angels to watch over them, and will severely punish those who afflict, despise, or offend them. These considerations should likewise encourage the faithful, and inspire them with great confidence. III. *Christ* says of offences that they are a great evil, that they must needs come, and yet that God is not the cause of them; that they proceed intirely from the faults of men; and that he will punish those who are the occasion of them. It follows from hence, that we ought to avoid sin and giving offence with the utmost care; and that we may do it by following our Lord's advice, and avoiding every thing that may be a stumbling-block to ourselves or others. Lastly, What our Lord says here, that there is joy in heaven over one repenting sinner, shews, that it is not lawful to despise any body; but, on the contrary, that we ought to procure the conversion of sinners, and the edification and salvation of all men, as far as in us lies. In the second part of this chapter, I. *Christ* establishes the authority and discipline of his church, and the necessity of reproofs, both private and public; he shews, that all the members of the church ought to submit

themselves to the discipline established in it, and that such as refuse to hear the church, ought to be looked upon as heathens and publicans; that is to say, they should not be any longer accounted members of the church, but be cut off from its communion: And he declares that God ratifies and confirms in heaven, what the church does here below agreeable to his intentions.

II. The promise that our Lord makes, to be present with, and hear those that are gathered together in his name, teaches us, that the prayers that are offered up in the spirit of unity and charity, are very acceptable to God, as well as those congregations that are formed to serve and call upon him. Lastly, *Christ* instructs us in the nature and necessity of forgiveness. He explains the nature of it, by saying, that a man ought to pardon even seventy times seven faults; which denotes, that forgiveness ought to be general and unlimited, and that we should be disposed to pardon all persons, and all sorts of offences, even such as are continued and repeated; and that at all times without ever being discouraged. He shews the necessity of such forgiveness, by the parable of the servant to whom his master had remitted a very considerable debt, and who would not pardon a very small sum to one of his fellow-servants. This parable sets before our eyes, First, The infinite goodness of God, who vouchsafes to pardon us, his servants and his creatures, though our sins are very great and very numerous: Secondly, The guilt and ingratitude of those who refuse to pardon men who are their equals, and whose offences are very trifling in comparison of the sins we commit against God. Thirdly, The just and terrible punishment of all those who do not pardon heartily, and universally, the offences and injuries they have received.

CHAP. XIX.

I. **THE** Pharisees having asked our Lord, whether it was lawful for husbands to put away their wives, as was the practice of the *Jews*; he answers them,

them, that divorces were contrary to the first institution of marriage, and that they ought not to prevail any longer. II. He blesses little children that were brought unto him. III. A rich young man asking what he must do to be saved, our Saviour, to prove him, whether he was prepared to follow him, told him, to go and sell all that he had. This answer discouraging the young man, he took occasion from hence to declare, that the love of riches would hinder many from being saved, and promises his apostles, who had forsaken all to follow him, that they should sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of *Israel*; that is, should be highly exalted when his kingdom was established, and be very considerable in the church. He promises also to reward those who should leave all for the sake of the Gospel.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WHAT our Saviour says at the beginning of this chapter, with respect to the divorces that were in use among the *Jews*, teaches us in general, that many things which had been tolerated till that time, by reason of the condition of that people, and of their hard and carnal temper, would not be allowed among Christians, because God has given them greater light, and called them to a higher degree of holiness. II. We learn here particularly, that by the divine institution, a man and a woman are inseparably united by the laws of matrimony; that those laws ought to be inviolably observed; and that nothing but adultery can justify a divorce, nor afford a liberty of marrying again. *Christ* shews us besides, that the Gospel calls us to great chastity, and even that there would be Christians that would absolutely renounce marriage, in order to serve God more acceptably, and with less interruption labour in promoting Christianity. III. Our Lord's blessing the little children which were presented to him, shews us, that such children are dear to him, and that he is disposed to receive and bless them;

from whence we may infer, that the devoting them to him by prayer and baptism, is very agreeable to his will; he would likewise teach us thereby, that we must be like little children in simplicity, innocence, and meekness, if we would enter into the kingdom of God. IV. The discourse our Lord had with the rich young man mentioned in this chapter, teaches us, that to enter into life everlasting, we must keep the commandments of God; and further, be ready to forsake all that we possess in this world when God calls us to it, and when we cannot keep them without being wanting in our duty towards him. The concern which this young man discovered at what *Christ* said to him, and the declaration of our Saviour, that it would be very hard for rich men to resolve to forsake their goods to come into the church; shews, that riches do commonly fix our hearts upon the world, and that the enjoyment of them is always dangerous. Nevertheless, *Christ* has taught us, that such a renunciation of worldly goods is not an impossible thing; but, on the contrary, both practicable, and even easy and agreeable too, when we are enlightened by faith, and assisted by the Spirit of God. If all Christians are not called, as the apostles were, to forsake all to follow *Christ*, we ought, at least, to take heed that the good things of this life do not hinder our salvation; we ought not to set our heart upon them, but should learn to use them without abusing them, and to employ them in works of piety and charity. By this means we shall procure to ourselves a treasure in heaven, and partake of those blessings with which our Lord has promised to reward, both in this world and the next, such as shall fulfil all these duties.

CHAP. XX.

THIS chapter contains, I. The parable of the labourers, who, going to work in the vineyard at different hours of the day, did all of them receive the same wages. II. *Christ*'s foretelling his own death

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and resurrection. III. His answer to the mother of St. *James* and St. *John*, who desired for her sons the chief place in his kingdom. IV. He gives sight to two blind men.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE design of our Lord in the parable of the labourers, was to teach his disciples, that the glorious rewards which he had promised to those who should forsake all for the Gospel, did not relate to them only; but that others, who should be called after them, even from among the Gentiles, would partake of the same rewards as those that were called first; and that, far from being jealous upon this account, they ought to rejoice at it. We must not, however, make a wrong use of this parable, nor conclude from thence, that it will be soon enough to repent at the end of our lives; on the contrary, we should consider, that all those that went into the vineyard at different hours of the day, went thither as soon as the master of the vineyard sent them; that those who did not go till the end of the day, did not go sooner, because they were not sooner sent; and that this was the reason why they did receive the same wages as the rest. From whence it appears, that those who obey whensoever God is pleased to call them; shall be saved; but this has no respect to those, who have been called a long while, even from the beginning of their lives, and have refused to obey the call; this very parable proves, that such are without excuse; and that we are all of us indispensibly obliged to labour with fidelity and perseverance, and, as soon as God calls, to do his will. II. We may observe, in this chapter, that our Lord forewarned his disciples of his being shortly to be put to death, that they might not be surprised when it did happen. III. *Christ's* answer to the mother of *James* and *John* deserves to be considered. This woman imagining, as the rest of the *Jews* did, that the Messiah should reign upon the earth, like the
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kings of this world, claimed for her two sons, the highest posts in his kingdom, as being of our Lord's kindred, and even distinguished from the rest of the apostles upon several occasions. *Jesus Christ* condemned that request, which shewed, that this woman did not understand the nature of his kingdom; and which might too have occasioned jealousies and divisions among the apostles. He told them, that they ought rather to be humbled and abased, and prepared to drink of the same cup with him, and be baptized with his baptism; that is, to suffer as he should, and not think of being exalted to dignities and preferments, like the great ones of this world; and that he might inspire them with such sentiments, he referred them to his example, saying, that he was come into the world to appear like a servant, and to suffer death. These words of our Saviour are a warning to all Christians, to expel from their hearts pride and ambition; not to seek after honour, or affect to be preferred before others; but to live humbly, and bear our cross, according to the example which the Son of God has given us. At the end of the chapter, we have a proof of our Lord's power, as well as of his tender compassion, in giving sight to two blind men.

CHAP. XXI. 1—22.

- I. **O**UR Lord makes his royal entry into *Jerusalem*.
 II. Drives out of the temple those that profaned it. III. Answers the Pharisees, who found fault with the acclamations of the people on his behalf. And, IV. Causes the fig-tree to wither away.

REFLECTIONS.

TO understand the reason and design of our Saviour's royal entry into *Jerusalem*, we must observe, that he had avoided till then all appearance of pomp, and being acknowledged publicly for the Messiah; but he thought fit, six days before his death, to make known to the world that he was the Messiah foretold by

by the prophets, and to be acknowledged for such by the people that attended him, and to enter into the temple in the midst of the acclamations of a great multitude. Nevertheless, he did it after a manner that by no means resembled the splendor of worldly princes; but which discovered a great deal of humility and meekness, and which was agreeable to what *Zechariah* had prophesied, saying, that the Messiah should come *meek, and sitting upon an ass*; which tended to shew, that he was the great King which God had promised to his people; but that his kingdom was not of this world. Let us here acknowledge the glory of our Redeemer, and at the same time his great goodness; let us render him our homage, in imitation of the people that followed him to *Jerusalem*; and since we know him much better than they did, let us worship him with greater respect and reverence; let us rejoice at his coming, and say, *Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord*. That action of *Christ*, in driving away those, that bought and sold in the outward courts of the temple things pertaining to the sacrifices, was an effect of his great zeal, by which he was pleased to make the *Jews* sensible of his divine and heavenly authority. From hence we may learn, not to profane the places in which God is worshipped, either by appearing there irreverently, or by rendering to God a hypocritical service. As for the miracle of the fig-tree that withered away, our Lord did it to strengthen the faith of his disciples, at a time when he was going to suffer death, and to instruct them in the virtue and efficacy of faith and prayer,

CHAP. XXI, 23—46,

THIS lesson consists of three parts: I. *Christ's* answer to the Pharisees, who demanded of him an account of his authority. II. The parable of the two sons whom their father sent into the vineyard. III. The parable of the husbandmen, who, after they had killed their master's servants, did likewise slay his son.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

WE must observe, in the first place, that when the Pharisees asked our Lord, from whence he derived his authority, he would not answer them directly, but was pleased to stop their mouths by asking them, what they thought of the baptism of *John*; by which he would convince them of a voluntary and malicious ignorance, and at the same time make them sensible that his authority proceeded from God, as well as that of *John* the Baptist, his forerunner. As for us, by whom this authority is perfectly understood, and who know that the doctrine of *Jesus Christ*, as well as that of *John* the Baptist, is divine, we ought to submit ourselves thereto, lest our incredulity expose us to greater condemnation than the Pharisees. The parable of the two sons, signifies, that those people who were looked upon as the most corrupt and vicious, had believed the preaching of *John* the Baptist sooner than the Pharisees and the chief men of the *Jews*, who, professing to be more learned and more holy than other men, ought to have been the first in receiving it. This parable is applicable to sinners, who repenting truly of their sins, return to their duty; and to bad Christians, who, having engaged to serve God, and to obey him, break their promises, and do not answer to their calling. The similitude of the husbandmen denotes three things: First, the favours that God had shewn the *Jews* in choosing them for his people, and in sending to them his servants at several times, and at last his own Son. Secondly, The ingratitude and naughtiness of the *Jews*, who, instead of acknowledging these favours, had rejected and persecuted the prophets, and crucified the Lord of life. Thirdly, That God would punish the *Jews* by destroying them, by taking away his covenant from them, and by calling the Gentiles in their stead; and that *Christ*, who had been rejected by the chief of the *Jews*, should be exalted to the highest glory, as had been foretold by the prophecy in the CXVIIIth Psalm.

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What this parable signified, is exactly come to pass; the *Jews* having been destroyed and rejected, the Gospel preached to the Gentiles, and the kingdom of God established throughout the world. Thus God deprives of his favour and of his covenant those who do not make a right use of them, nor produce the fruits which he expects from them.

CHAP. XXII. 1—22.

CHRIST continues the discourses of the preceding chapter, and proposes, I. The parable of the marriage. II. He answers the Pharisees, when they asked him, if it was lawful to pay tribute to the emperor.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE meaning of the parable of the marriage is, that the *Jews* had been first called to salvation by *Jesus Christ*, but that they would reject it, and for that reason would be destroyed; that afterwards God would offer that favour to the Gentiles; that the Gentiles would receive it, and be admitted into his covenant: but that there would be among those that came into the church, hypocrites, who should likewise receive the punishment of their crime. All that our Saviour foretold by this similitude has been fulfilled, the divine vengeance having fallen upon the unbelieving *Jews*, and the Gentiles having been called and received into the church; which is an incontestible proof of the divinity of the Gospel, and the certainty of the promises contained therein. Let us learn from hence, that God is very gracious to men, when he calls them to salvation; and that those who slight and do not improve his kind invitation, have reason to expect the severest vengeance. Let us particularly observe what was said to the man who sat down to table without a wedding garment, and was cast out. God will not only punish those who openly reject the Gospel, but hypocrites also, who calling themselves Christians,

Christians, and living in the external communion of the church, without being clothed with sincere faith and true holiness, shall not escape the punishment due to their hypocrisy. Those who asked our Lord, whether it was lawful to give tribute unto *Cæsar*, designed by this question, either to render him odious to the people, if he said it was their duty to pay tribute, or to accuse him to *Pilate*, if he answered, no. Our Lord's reply to this captious question, is an argument of his profound wisdom; and teaches us, that our duty to kings and princes, and our duty towards God, are both indispensable, and that they are not opposite to each other; but, on the contrary, are perfectly consistent: therefore we ought religiously to observe them both, submitting to the highest powers, and paying them their due, in such manner, nevertheless, as not to forget that our duty to God challenges the first place, and ought always to be first and chiefly regarded

CHAP. XXII. 23—46.

I. **THE** Sadducees, who denied the resurrection of the dead, having proposed to *Christ* the case of a woman that had seven husbands, and, in order to confound him, having asked which of the seven she would belong to after the resurrection; our Lord answers, that there would be no such thing as marrying in the life to come, and proves from the Scriptures, that the dead should rise again. II. He answers a question put to him by a scribe, about the greatest commandment of the law. III. He asks the Pharisees, How the Messiah was both the Son of *David* and his Lord? which they could not answer, and he did not think fit to explain to them.

REFLECTIONS.

IN *Christ's* discourse with the Sadducees about the resurrection, we ought to admire his divine wisdom, and,

and, at the same time, the strength and evidence with which he confounds them, and proves that the dead shall rise again. This passage of the Gospel teaches us clearly two things: First, That nothing is more certain than the resurrection of the dead; and that those who have been acceptable to God in their lifetime, as the patriarchs, are not annihilated by death. This doctrine is the support of our faith and hope. Secondly, What shall be the state of the saints in glory: Of which *Christ* has told us, that the bands of flesh and blood shall not subsist in the life to come, and that the blessed will not be any more subject to the wants of the body and necessities of this life, but will be like the angels of God. This consideration should induce us to become spiritual men here, and live in great purity, because without this we cannot attain at length to a happy resurrection. II. *Christ* inculcates here another very important doctrine; which is, that the great commandment of the law is, *To love God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves*: and since this is the sum of all religion, let it be our great care to fix in our hearts this true love of God, and of all men. III. With respect to the question which *Christ* put to the Pharisees, how the Messiah could be at the same time the son of *David*, and his Lord; it must be observed, that he only proposed it to them, to make them sensible of their ignorance, particularly in relation to the person of the Messiah, and to the nature of his kingdom; but that he would not explain it to them, because they would not have comprehended nor believed what he should have said to them; and likewise because it was not convenient to speak openly of the glory and dignity of his person at that time: but this question is very plain and obvious to us, who know that *Jesus Christ* was the son of *David*, as a man, since he was descended from that king; but that he is *David's* Lord, and the Lord of all men, as he is the Son of God; God having placed him at his right hand, as king of the world, and of the church, with sovereign authority
over

over all things: let us therefore glory in our obedience and subjection to him.

CHAP. XXIII.

OUR Lord speaks against the Pharisees and Scribes. He owns all that is good and lawful in their doctrine, and in their ministry, but accuses them of hypocrisy, and affecting a great appearance of holiness. He says, they were filled with pride; that they rejected the Gospel themselves, and hindered others from receiving it; he represents them as a set of covetous, wicked wretches, who made religion and prayer subservient to their interest. He takes notice, that their doctrine about oaths was a proof of their impiety and detestable avarice; forasmuch as they taught, that if a man swore by the gold, and by the gifts that were offered in the temple and upon the altar, the obligation upon his conscience was stronger than if he had sworn by the altar, or by the temple itself. He adds, that besides the tithes prescribe by the law, they gave tithes of herbs, and every thing that grew, which God had not commanded; and that, notwithstanding this apparent strictness, they neglected duties of much greater importance. He further adds, that though their external appearance was holy, their hearts were very corrupt: that they adorned the sepulchres of the prophets, and at the same time persecuted the servants of God unto death. Lastly, He declares, that they drew upon themselves, and the whole nation, the most dreadful judgments of God; and laments, in the most tender manner, the destruction of *Jerusalem*, which was brought to pass in a few years.

REFLECTIONS.

IT may be observed upon this chapter in general, First, That our Lord drawing near his death, did, with a holy liberty, and with an authority nothing less than divine, rebuke the Scribes and Pharisees for their wickedness and hypocrisy; it being very necessary he should

should discover to the people what they were. Secondly, The repeated curses denounced in this discourse against hypocrites, should make us look upon hypocrisy as a most odious sin, especially in those who make great professions of piety and zeal. The particular reflections we are to make upon this chapter, are, I. That when the ministers of religion teach sound doctrine, but lead ill lives, we must not imitate their actions, but ought, nevertheless, to hear and obey them when they preach the truth. II. That all the disciples of *Jesus Christ*, and particularly those to whom the care of the church is entrusted ought to be wholly free from hypocrisy, ambition and covetousness, if they would not resemble those Pharisees whom our Lord cursed. III. That they themselves ought first to walk in the way which leads to heaven, and then make others walk in the same path, by contributing their utmost to the conversion of sinners, and to the edification of all men. IV. The censure which *Christ* passes upon the doctrine of the Pharisees, and upon the article of swearing, shews, that an oath ought to be held in great reverence, since we thereby appeal to God himself; that perjury, and the breach of vows, is a great sin. V. We here observe, that one of those tokens whereby hypocrites are known, is their affecting an outward holiness, being nice and scrupulous in things of little consequence, and neglecting the most important matters of religion; such as faith, mercy, and obedience to God's commands. Therefore we ought chiefly to apply ourselves to the observation of those most essential duties, to purify our hearts, and to settle in them faith and a true fear of God. Nevertheless, we are likewise taught by our Saviour, that although external duties be not the most necessary, yet we must not omit nor despise them; when he says, these things ought you to have done, and not leave the other undone. The threatenings which *Christ* denounces against the *Jews*, who, after having murdered the prophets, would put him to death likewise, shews, that God justly destroyed them, and that the

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ingratitude of such as reject the word of God and of his servants, will not remain unpunished. Lastly, The tenderness with which our Saviour deplores the ruin of the *Jews*, that had made such ill returns to his goodness, proves very clearly that God only desires the salvation of men; and that if there are any who perish, it is wholly through their own fault.

CHAP. XXIV.

OUR Lord foretels the destruction of the temple of *Jerusalem*; and being asked by his disciples when it would happen, and what signs should precede that destruction, and the end of the world, answers them, that there should arise false christs and false prophets; that there would be wars, famine, and calamities of all kinds; that his disciples would be persecuted, and that the Gospel would be preached in several parts of the world. He says, moreover, that when the abomination of desolation should come into the holy place, that is, when the idolators should enter *Judea*, and besiege *Jerusalem* and the temple, this would be a sign that its destruction was near; and that then people should retire and flee away from the miseries which would fall at that time upon the *Jewish* nation. To this our Lord adds, that the sun and the stars should be darkened; which are figurative expressions taken from the prophets, denoting the great revolutions that would happen in the world, and in the state of the *Jews*, and the dreadful marks of God's wrath that would be seen by all. He says also, that the sign of the Son of Man should appear; which signifies, that *Christ* would manifest, in an illustrious and transcendent manner, by destroying the *Jews*, and establishing his kingdom, that he was the Son of God. He declares, that all these things should come to pass before that generation was passed away; that the exact time of his coming should be known to none, but should come suddenly upon them, as the flood did upon men in the days of *Noah*. Lastly, he exhorts his disciples to watch, and

be always ready, lest he should come upon them un-
awares.

REFLECTIONS.

WE must consider, in the first place, that all that *Christ* foretold here, concerning the destruction of *Jerusalem*, came to pass soon after his ascension. For there did arise several false messiahs and several impostors, who, under the pretence of religious zeal, seduced the *Jews*, and stirred up seditions through all *Judea*. There were likewise wars, in which an infinite number of the *Jews* were destroyed, and abundance of them carried off by famine and pestilence: the Apostles and Christians were persecuted; the Gospel was preached and established in several countries; the *Romans* entered *Judea*, besieged *Jerusalem*, and demolished it with its temple; and the Christians, making use of our Saviour's warning, retired from that city and were saved, whilst the *Jews* perished miserably. All this happened, as *Jesus Christ* had expressly declared it would, before that generation of men was gone, about forty years after his death: which is an unanswerable proof of the truth and divinity of these predictions, which were made known to the world long before the destruction of *Jerusalem*. We see, in the destruction of *Jerusalem*, a remarkable instance of the judgments of God upon unbelievers, as well as of his protection of the faithful. Finally, The exact completion of what our Lord foretold of the destruction of *Jerusalem*, ought to convince us, that what he has so expressly said of the end of the world, and of the final destruction of the wicked, will be fulfilled in like manner. The time of this second coming is concealed from us, as well as that of our own death, that we might be continually prepared for it, and that terrible day may not surprise us, as the deluge did mankind in the time of *Noah*, nor as the *Jews* were surprised at the destruction of *Jerusalem*. *Christ* shews us himself, that this is the use we are to make of his whole

whole discourse, by the similitude of the good and bad servant; and by the exhortation denoting the end of that similitude, and of all that is contained in this chapter: *Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.*

CHAP. XXV.

OUR Lord, after speaking in the foregoing chapter of his coming, and exhorting his disciples to watchfulness, continues his discourse, and shews, I. By the parable of the ten virgins; and, II. By that of the talents, the necessity of watching, and of preparing for his coming. He afterwards speaks of the last judgment.

REFLECTIONS.

THE parable of the virgins is taken from the practice of the *Jews* at their weddings, at which their maidens were used to meet the bridegroom and bride with lighted lamps: and by this parable *Christ* gave his disciples to understand, that they were continually to expect and be prepared for his coming. The wise virgins represent the true believers, that live in faith, and in the practice of their duty, and in the expectation of our Lord's coming; and the foolish virgins represent the false Christians, who neglect their duty. The coming of the bridegroom, at midnight, and the condition the wise and foolish virgins were in, signifies, that *Christ* will come to judge the world when he is least expected; and that then those that shall be found ready will be filled with joy, and with a holy confidence, and shall enter with him into his glory; whilst, on the other hand, those who have neglected to prepare themselves, shall have for their portion nothing but misery and despair, and will in vain attempt to be admitted to the joys of the righteous. We may observe three things upon the parable of the talents: First, That God calls men to serve him, and that he grants his grace and his gifts to some more, to others less;

less; that each of them may employ them according to his calling, and the measure he has received, to the glory of God and the salvation of men. Secondly, That some, like the faithful servants, make a good use of these gifts and graces; and that others render them useless by their negligence. Thirdly, That God will oblige both to render an account of their behaviour; that he will praise and reward the fidelity of those that have employed his gifts in promoting his glory, and that those who have abused them, shall be punished for their unbelief. Our Lord expressly declares, that these last will be without excuse, because God is not a hard and unjust master, who would reap where he has not sowed; that is, he never requires of men more than they are able to perform. Thus, by each of these parables, *Christ* teaches us after what manner he will judge those men, to whom he has given the knowledge of himself: he warns us to adhere to our duty with constancy, and that each of us serve him in our respective vocations. There are four things principally to be observed in the description of the last judgment. The first is, that *Jesus Christ* will descend from heaven with glory, and that it is he who shall judge the world. Secondly, That all men shall appear before him, and all be judged by him, without exception. The third is, That he will judge them by their works, and that he will chiefly have respect to works of charity, and to the good that is done to his members; because such works are proofs and effects of faith, and of the love we have for him. The fourth thing is, that he will separate the good from the wicked, by receiving the good into the kingdom of heaven, and casting the wicked into eternal torments. Since *Christ* has so expressly warned us of all these things, and since we know that we must all appear before his tribunal, to receive according to the good or evil we have done, let us behave ourselves with godliness and fear during the time of our abode in this world; let us adhere to the practice of good works, and above all, to those of mercy and charity; that at the day of the last and

glorious appearance of the Son of God, we may be free from that terror and despair which will then fall upon the wicked, and appear before him with joy and confidence, and be of the number of those to whom he shall say; *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*

CHAP. XXVI. 1—35.

HERE begins the history of our Saviour's passion;

I. The priests form a resolution to put *Christ* to death. II. A woman anoints our Lord with a precious oil. III. *Judas* bargains with the priests to deliver up his master to them. And. IV. *Christ* celebrates the passover, and during that repast, he makes mention of the treachery of *Judas*; institutes the Holy Supper, and foretels that *St. Peter* should deny him.

REFLECTIONS.

THE first reflection we are to make here, relates to the time of our Lord's passion; I. *Jesus* knowing he was to be crucified at the feast of the passover, repaired to *Jerusalem* at that time; and though the priests did not intend to put him to death during that festival, yet it was the will of God that he should then die, because it was the time of offering up the paschal lamb, which was the type of our Lord's sacrifice; and that the *Jews*, who came from all parts upon that account, might be witnesses of his death. II. The example of that woman, who anointed him with a precious perfume, should excite us to honour our Lord in the best manner we are able: and what our Lord says in defence of this action, shews us, that he accepts of what we do to testify our love and our respect for him; this ought likewise to induce us to judge favourably of other men's actions, especially when proceeding from a good principle; and never neglect to assist those that are in need and necessity. III. The agreement of *Judas* with the priests, is a proof what crimes,

crimes, and what obdurateness, avarice will lead men into, and how careful we ought to be, that that passion do not steal into and root itself in our hearts. IV. Let it be observed, that *Jesus Christ* foretold the treachery of *Judas*, to make him sensible his design was known to him, and that his disciples might confess, that nothing could befall him but what he had foreseen, and was contented to expose himself to. V. What especially deserves our attention in this chapter, is the Lord's Supper, which our Saviour, just before his crucifixion, instituted to be a memorial of his death and sufferings to the end of the world: this obliges us to hold that sacrament in great reverence, and to celebrate it in a manner conformable to the design of our blessed Redeemer. VI. *Christ's* prediction, that St. *Peter* should deny him, proves, that our Lord sees the heart, and knows things to come; and what he said to that apostle, who answered him with so much assurance, should teach us, never to presume upon our own strength, but to distrust ourselves, and be continually upon our guard against temptation.

CHAP. XXVI. 36—75.

IN this part of the history of the passion we see, I. What our Lord suffered in the garden. II. How he was taken by *Judas*. III. What happened when he appeared before the council, and was condemned. IV. St. *Peter's* fall and repentance.

REFLECTIONS.

WE ought most seriously to reflect upon what *Christ* suffered in the garden, and especially the extreme sorrow and terrors which he then felt. It was the will of God that he should undergo these things, that it might appear he died for the sins of mankind, and was subject to all the innocent infirmities of our nature. And we ought to judge, by the condition to which our Saviour was then reduced, how great the horror of sin is, and how dreadful the punishments are

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which wicked men will one day suffer. Those humble and fervent prayers which *Christ* made to God in his agony, teach us to pray with perseverance and submission, when we are in affliction. The resignation of our Lord to the will of his Father, is a proof of his perfect obedience to him, and of his love towards us, and ought to be a pattern to us, in what condition soever he thinks fit to place us. The warning that *Christ* gave his apostles to watch and pray, lest they should sink under that great temptation to which they were going to be exposed, is a most wholesome advice, serving to teach us, that watchfulness and prayer are the principal means to resist temptation, and that we are overcome by it when we neglect those means. In the manner in which *Judas* betrayed our Lord, we may see on one hand the treachery of that wretched disciple, and on the other, the readiness and cheerfulness with which *Christ* exposed himself to death. The action of St. *Peter*, who smote with his sword one of those who came to apprehend *Christ* is to be considered as the effect of a rash zeal; and the rebuke that our Saviour gave that apostle, is a lesson to us never to avenge ourselves, nor proceed to violence upon any occasion whatever. That which is to be observed upon the appearance of *Christ* before the council of the *Jews*, is, I. That notwithstanding all the endeavours of the *Jews* to find out false witnesses, and some pretended reason for condemning him, he could not be convicted of any crime, and was only condemned for acknowledging himself to be the Son of God. In this we discover the malice and injustice of the *Jews*, and the intire innocence of our Saviour. II. The great patience with which he suffered all the injuries and affronts, and all the unjust treatments which he received from them, should cause us to remember what St. *Peter* said upon this occasion: That *Christ* suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps, 1 Peter ii. 21. III. What our Lord said to the *Jews*, when they condemned him to death, namely, that they should see him coming in the clouds of heaven,

heaven, deserves a particular attention. Here we may observe *Jesus Christ* speaking as a king, and as the Son of God, at the very time of his condemnation: and the establishment of his kingdom, as well as the destruction of the *Jews*, did soon after verify what he had foretold upon that occasion. IV. The fall of *St. Peter*, who, after having been warned by our Lord, and after having protested that he would never renounce him, did yet deny him three times, even with imprecations and oaths, is a sad instance of human inconstancy and frailty. By which we see, that even those who have good intentions may greatly fall, when they are not fortified against temptation; and that to secure ourselves from it, it behoves us to stand upon our guard and to suspect ourselves; to pray without ceasing, and to shun the places, and avoid the occasions that may draw us into sin. But we must likewise consider, that if the fall of *St. Peter* was great, his repentance was speedy, and that he bitterly bewailed his fault. So we, when we happen to fall, ought to rise quickly, and atone for our sin by the tears of a sincere repentance, and by a true amendment of our lives.

CHAP. XXVII. 1—26.

I, *JUDAS*, seeing that *Christ* was condemned, acknowledged his crime, and laid violent hands upon himself. II. *Jesus* appeared before *Pilate*, the governor of *Jerusalem*, who, after having made several attempts to deliver him, and to pacify the *Jews*, did at last pronounce the sentence of his condemnation.

REFLECTIONS.

THE remorse of conscience *Judas* felt, when he saw they were going to put *Jesus* to death, the confession he made of his crime, and his tragical end, shew the innocence of our Lord, and how unjustly he was condemned. It likewise discovers the state of a guilty conscience, and the horror of that remorse
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and despair wherewith the wicked are tormented when they become sensible of their crimes, and are pursued by divine vengeance. The use to which the *Jews* put the money that *Judas* returned them, served to perpetuate the memory of this event, as it was a proof of the injustice which they had committed, and as it was a plain accomplishment of the prophecy of *Zechariah*. As to what happened before *Pilate*, it must be observed, that *Christ* owned in his presence, as he had already done before the council, that he was the Messiah. Thus in imitation of our Lord, we ought to confess the truth, even at the peril of our lives, as often as we are called to it. We see, moreover, in this history, the rage of the *Jews*, which nothing was capable of mollifying, and how they preferred a murderer and a seditious person before *Jesus Christ*; the innocence of our Lord may also be here observed, since it was acknowledged by *Pilate* himself; and particularly the iniquity of that judge, who, after a long opposition, did yield to his death at last, notwithstanding the warning he received from his wife, and though he was persuaded that he was condemning an innocent man. We have therefore an example in *Pilate* of those that sin against light, and that sacrifice their duty and their conscience to fear, complaisance and interest; as well as those that think themselves guiltless when they are committing the greatest crimes, and that throw upon others the faults which they themselves are the authors of. This teaches us to adhere always inviolably to our duty, and to pursue with courage and steadiness the motions of our own conscience, without suffering any consideration whatever to turn us aside. Lastly, We ought most seriously to reflect upon these words of the *Jews*, when our Lord was condemned, *His blood be on us, and on our children*. Both they and their posterity have found the effects of this imprecation which they made against themselves; God having revenged the death of his Son upon that guilty nation, by the destruction of their city, and by that miserable condition in which they have remained ever since.

CHAP. XXVII. 27—66.

ST. *Matthew* here relates, I. The crucifixion and death of *Jesus Christ*. II. The wonderful things that then happened. III. His burial.

REFLECTIONS.

AFTER having heard the relation of our Saviour's passion, and seen what contempt and pain he was exposed to before his crucifixion, and whilst he was upon the cross, we ought to consider, that he suffered all these things for the expiation of our sins, and to confirm, by his death, the promises he had made us of life everlasting. The use we are to make of this important passage of the Gospel, is to consider that death as the wonderful means whereby God has saved us; to praise his mercy in delivering up his Son to death, and the love of our gracious Saviour in giving himself for us, and to love him as he has loved us. The sufferings of *Christ* ought likewise to make us renounce sin, since he died to destroy it; and teach us also to suffer, and to bear our cross with patience. The several prodigies that happened at his death, betoken the horror of the crime the *Jews* had then committed in crucifying him, and shew that *Jesus Christ* was the Son of God. The rending of the vail of the temple, visibly denotes, that the worship of the *Jews* was drawing to an end, and their temple going to be destroyed, and that heaven should thenceforwards be open to men. The opening of the sepulchres of those who rose with our Lord, denoted, that *Jesus* should come out of his tomb, and that the dead should rise at the last day, by the efficacy of his death and resurrection. With respect to the burial of our Lord, we may consider, that he was interred, that people might be more fully satisfied that he was really dead; and God was pleased he should be put into a sepulchre where none had yet lain, to shew, that it was he himself that arose from thence. The circumstances of his burial, as well as those

those of his passion, are the completion of several prophecies. And the belief that *Christ* was buried, is very proper to remove the horror which we should otherwise have conceived of our own death and burial, and to fill us with the hope of the resurrection and of a better life. Lastly, The *Jews* causing our Lord's sepulchre to be so strictly closed and watched, is a thing worthy our notice, because, contrary to their own intentions, they furnish us thereby with undeniable proof of his resurrection.

CHAP. XXVIII.

THIS last chapter of the Gospel of St. *Matthew* contains, I. A short account of the resurrection of *Jesus Christ*. II. What that *Jews* did to persuade the people that his disciples had taken away his body. III. *Christ's* appearing to the apostles, and the directions he gave them before he ascended into heaven.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are three principal reflections to be made upon the resurrection of *Jesus Christ*: I. That God's sending his angels to take him out of the sepulchre, as he had foretold, is an undeniable proof that he is the Son of God. II. That that resurrection was a certain fact, attested by angels, and by the women that saw our Saviour, and afterwards by the apostles, and by a great number of other persons. III. And above all that the resurrection is the foundation of our salvation, and of all our hopes, since we are hereby fully assured, that we are reconciled to God, and that we shall rise again at the last day. What the chief men among the *Jews* did to persuade the people that *Christ's* disciples had taken away his body, discovers the extreme malice and invincible obstinacy of his enemies: but all their precautions were vain, and what they feared did not fail to happen: thus God confounds the wicked in their designs, and makes truth triumph over all opposition. Lastly, What our Saviour said

said to his apostles, of the supreme power to which he was going to be exalted, the orders he gave them to preach and to baptise, and the promise he made of being with them to the end of the world, ought all to be seriously considered. *Christ* spoke then to his disciples, as Lord of heaven and earth, and shewed plainly that his doctrine was going to be spread over all the earth, that a great many people would embrace it and be baptised, and that his church should subsist for ever. The speedy and wonderful success of the preaching of the apostles, and the establishment of the Christian religion, proved afterwards, and does still prove the truth of these last words of our Lord; and they are so many powerful motives to induce us to believe in him, to confess the divinity of his doctrine, and to do all he has commanded us; particularly, to look upon baptism as a sacred institution of our Saviour, and to reverence that holy ceremony by which we are consecrated to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

The end of the Gospel according to St. MATTHEW

THE
G O S P E L
ACCORDING TO
ST. M A R K.

ARGUMENT.

This Gospel was written some time after that of St. Matthew, it is thought, about ten years after Christ's ascension, by St. Mark, under the inspection of the apostle St. Peter.

CHAP. I.

IN this chapter St. *Mark* gives a short account of *John* the Baptist's preaching the baptism of *Jesus Christ*, his temptation, his first preaching in *Galilee*, and the calling of his apostles. He afterwards relates the cure of a man possessed with an unclean spirit, of St. *Peter's* mother-in-law, and of several other sick and diseased, and lastly of a leper.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

ST. *Mark* shews us in the beginning of his Gospel,

I. That *John* the Baptist was sent, as had been foretold of him by the prophets, to declare the manifestation of the kingdom of God, by preaching repentance, by baptising those that confessed their sins, and by warning the people that the Messiah was going to appear. God was pleased by the ministry of *John* to prepare the *Jews* for the reception of *Jesus Christ*, and to teach them that the kingdom of the Messiah would be a spiritual kingdom, and that he came to establish holiness in the world, and to turn men to God; so that we ought to look upon repentance and holiness of life, as the design of our Lord's coming: and this is what he himself has taught us, having begun his ministry by preaching repentance, as *John* the Baptist his forerunner had done; saying, *Repent ye, and believe the Gospel.* II. What happened at the baptism of *Jesus Christ*, viz. the descending of the Holy Ghost, and the voice which God caused to be heard from heaven, tended to convince *John* the Baptist, and the people, that *Jesus* was the Son of God, whose doctrine all men were to receive with obedience and faith. It was likewise to shew, that he was really the Son of God, and to convince the devil of this truth, that God was pleased to suffer him to be tempted in the desert. III. The choice which our Lord made of some fishermen to be his apostles, shews that he came not to establish a temporal and worldly kingdom, since those people had nothing to distinguish themselves in this world: this likewise proves, that the wonderful effects of their ministry proceeded not from them, but that the whole glory is to be attributed to God alone. IV. Our Lord soon made himself known by miracles, which manifested not only his infinite power, but his great goodness also. This method providence made choice of to prove to the *Jews* that he was sent from God, and that his doctrine was true and divine; and to convince men still more of this truth,

truth, was the reason why he worked his miracles, commonly, in favour only of such who believed that he was able to do them, and who desired it of him. He nevertheless took all the care he could, that those miracles should not make too great a noise: this he did upon prudential reasons, lest those among the *Jews* that owned him for the Messiah, should have raised commotions and tumults in order to declare him king, according to their notion at that time, that the Messiah should be a temporal king; which might have occasioned some disturbance, and engaged the *Romans* to oppose the disciples of *Christ*. Lastly, When we read the account all of these miracles, we should reflect, that since our Saviour is not less powerful, nor less gracious now, than he was when upon earth, he will grant us what is necessary to the healing or saving of our souls, more certainly than he formerly granted a cure to the diseases of the body.

CHAP. II.

I. *CHRIST* cures a paralytical person. II. Calls *Levi*, which is St. *Matthew*, to the office of an apostle. III. He gives his reasons why he eat with sinners, and why he did not oblige his disciples to observe regular fasts, like those of *John* the Baptist, and of the Pharisees. IV. He returns an answer to the Pharisees, who blamed his apostles for plucking the ears of corn upon the Sabbath-day.

REFLECTIONS.

THE first thing to be observed in the cure of the man that had the palsy is, the faith of those who brought the man to *Jesus*; who, when they saw they could not come near our Lord, let the sick man down through the roof of the house before *Jesus*; who, seeing this surprising instance of their faith, wrought for them the miracle which they believed he was able to perform. From whence it appears, how agreeable faith is to our Saviour, and how efficacious in obtaining

ing from him the mercies we stand in need of. It appears also from hence, that besides the power of healing distempers, *Christ* had also an authority to forgive sins, which obliges us to consider him, not only as a prophet sent from God, but likewise as our judge, from whom we may expect health to our souls, and pardon of our offences through faith and repentance. II. We learn from this chapter, that our Lord came into the world to call sinners to repentance, which he gave us to understand by eating with publicans, and such other persons as the *Jews* looked upon to be great sinners. This doctrine ought to fill us with confidence, and at the same time make us acknowledge, that it is absolutely necessary to repent and amend our lives, if we would be saved. III. When it is said, that *Christ* did not oblige his disciples to regular fasts, such as those observed by the disciples of *John* the Baptist, it must be understood in this manner, namely, that our Lord had particular reasons for not confining his disciples at that time to those kinds of fasts; because both he and his disciples were continually moving from place to place, and conversing with all kinds of people. He declared, however, that his disciples should be called, after he was taken from them, not only to fastings but to great sufferings; and that if they were not yet exposed to them, it was because they were not able to bear them; just as a piece of new cloth would not suit with an old garment, and new wine would break old bottles. Therefore we must not conclude from this passage of the Gospel, that our Saviour condemned fasting and mortification; on the contrary, this doctrine evidently supposes, that our Lord calls his disciples to a mortified life, and to bear their cross. IV. We see, lastly, that *Christ* justifies the action of his disciples, who, being very hungry, plucked the ears of corn upon the Sabbath-day, upon which occasion he quoted what *David* did in a like case. This teaches us, that in extreme necessity, and when the external duties of religion cannot be observed without great inconvenience, they may be dispensed

pened with: provided it be not out of contempt, and that we never violate the essentials of religion; it being nothing but hypocrisy and superstition, like that of the Pharisees, to act otherwise.

CHAP. III.

THE evangelist relates, I. The healing of a man whose hand was withered, and of several other diseased persons. II. The calling of the twelve apostles. III. What *Christ* said to the Pharisees, who ascribed his miracles to the power of the devil. IV. His declaration, that his true disciples were as dear to him as his own kindred.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WE may still observe the great goodness and sovereign power of our Lord, in the several miracles mentioned in this chapter, which is very proper to confirm our faith, and to fill us with confidence in him. We see, in particular, in the cure wrought upon the man whose hand was withered, the great blindness and malice of the Pharisees, who were offended at *Christ's* doing this upon the Sabbath-day. What he says to those enemies of his doctrine, and the just indignation he expressed, shews us, how much he is offended when we resist the truth, and, under a pretence of religion, condemn works of piety and charity. II. The choice our Lord made of the twelve apostles to be with him, and the power he gave them to preach the Gospel, and to work miracles, like those done by himself, must be looked upon as an effect of his great wisdom, as well as of his goodness towards all men, since he was afterwards to make use of the ministry of those apostles, to cause the Gospel to be preached throughout the world. III. The third reflection relates to the sin of the Pharisees, whom *Christ* accuses of blaspheming against the Holy Ghost. *St. Mark* clearly explains wherein this blasphemy consisted: which was, that seeing our Lord cast out devils, they

they said, he did these miracles by the power of the devil; which was a most heinous instance of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and the mark of an irrecoverable state of wickedness. This example proves, that when once men have abandoned themselves to their prejudices and passions, they are hardened against all that can be offered to them, though never so clear, and never so strong? and that instead of yielding to evidence, they become yet more wicked. IV. Our Lord's declaring that he loved his true disciples as much as his nearest relations, teaches us, that the surest means of being loved by him, is to set ourselves to hear his word, and to do his will; and that we likewise, in imitation of him, ought particularly to cherish those persons that fear God, and to esteem them above all others.

CHAP. IV.

THIS chapter contains, I. The parable of the seed, and its explanation. II. Another parable of seed cast into the earth, and at length producing its fruit. III. The parable of the grain of mustard. IV. Christ's miracle in laying the storm.

REFLECTIONS.

THE explanation which *Jesus Christ* himself has given of the similitude of the seed, sets it in a clear light, and expresses the meaning and use of it. This is what the Saviour of the world has thought fit to teach us by it: the seed that fell upon the way represents those who hear the Gospel, but do not receive it, nor are affected with it. The seed that fell upon rocky places, denotes those who receive the word of God only for a time, but in persecution and temptation forsake *Christ*. The seed that fell among thorns, and was thereby choked, is the image of those in whom the word would produce fruit, if their hearts were not taken up with the love of the riches and pleasures of the world, and with the cares of this life.

And

And the seed sown in good ground, represents those who have a good and well-disposed heart, and in whom the Gospel produces good fruit. Now it is our duty to examine ourselves, and to try whether we are of the number of those hardened ones, upon whom the word of God makes no impression; or of those inconstant and cowardly ones, who, after having been affected, do not persevere; or of those carnal or worldly ones, in whom the word is rendered unprofitable, by the love of the riches and pleasures of this life; or, lastly of those faithful hearers, who bring forth in abundance the fruit which God expects from them. Let these divine instructions take root in our hearts, and, as *Christ* himself has exhorted us, let us take heed how we receive them, always remembering, that God gives more light and greater gifts to those that make a right use of them; but that he takes them away from such as abuse them, or that do not improve them. The design of our Lord in the similitude of the seed springing up, and growing by little and little; and in the other, of a grain of mustard, was to shew, that notwithstanding there was no great appearance at that time that his doctrine should make any considerable progress, by reason of his own low estate, and the small number of those who received his doctrine, yet it would soon be spread throughout the whole earth. *Christ* expressed these things in parables, because he would not then declare openly that his Gospel was to be preached to other nations, for fear of shocking and giving offence to the *Jews*: but these parables became very obvious and plain afterwards, by the establishment of the Christian Religion, so that they do now furnish us with invincible proofs of the truth of the Gospel. In the history of the miracle which our Saviour wrought by calming a tempest, we may observe the great concern of the apostles, who were afraid of perishing, though *Jesus* was in the midst of them; which shewed that their faith was still weak, as he himself reproached them. We may likewise discover therein his goodness towards them,

them, and that wonderful power which turned their fear into astonishment and admiration. The children of God are exposed to many dangers, to many fears and infirmities, but he helpeth them, and after he has tried them by affliction, gives such proofs of his goodness in their deliverance, as may strengthen their faith, and fill them with joy and consolation.

CHAP. V.

I. **T**HE evangelist relates a most remarkable miracle which our Saviour wrought, by delivering a man possessed with a legion of devils. II. The healing of a woman that had an issue of blood, and the raising the daughter of *Jairus* from the dead.

REFLECTIONS.

THE history of the possessed with devils, does very much deserve our attention. We may observe here a most evident proof of the power which the devils exercised at that time, by God's permission, over mankind; but we see likewise that *Christ* had a sovereign authority over them; that he came to destroy the kingdom of the devil, and that he was always ready to display his power in favour of such as wanted his assistance. Our Lord, after having delivered this demoniack, gave the devils leave to enter into the swine, and to hurry them headlong into the sea, that it might appear that this man was really possessed, and to prove the truth and greatness of the miracle which he had wrought; it was likewise to shew, that the devils could do nothing but by his permission; and as a trial and chastisement of the inhabitants of those parts, who, as the history informs us, would not bear our Saviour among them. This obliges us to thank God, that since the coming of *Jesus Christ* the devil has not the same power as he had formerly over mankind; and to consider, that as sad and deplorable as the condition of this demoniack was, yet it was by no means so dreadful as that of sinners who abandon themselves

to evil, and who are slaves to the devil and their own passions; since this man did not fall into this sorrowful condition by his own fault, and that besides, the devil could only hurt his body, whereas sinners do, of their own accord, become his slaves by performing his will; by which means, this enemy of God and man draws their souls into the abyss of everlasting destruction. The example of that woman whose faith our Lord commends, and who was healed by touching the hem of his garment, proves that humility and faith have a great efficacy, that trust in *Jesus Christ* is never vain, and that he is always ready to extend his favours to those that apply themselves to him with such dispositions. The great power of our Lord appears yet with more lustre, in the resurrection of the daughter of *Jairus*; of which it must be observed, that *Christ* did not only heal the sick, but that he likewise restored life to the dead; whereby he did both display his infinite power, and confirm the promises which he has made of raising us up at the last day. Thus the consideration of this miracle is of very great efficacy to produce in us a firm hope of immortality, to fill us with comfort in the expectation of it, and to encourage us more and more to the study and practice of piety and good works; that we may one day partake of that blessed resurrection which *Christ* has promised.

CHAP. VI. 1—29.

WE have here an account, I. Of our Saviour's arrival at *Nazareth*, and of the unbelief of the inhabitants of that town. II. Of the mission of the twelve apostles into *Judea*. III. Of the death of *John* the Baptist.

REFLECTIONS.

THESE are the reflections which we ought to make upon the three forementioned heads: I. The first relates to the unbelief and ingratitude of the people of *Nazareth*, who being so happy as to have our Saviour among

among them, did not acknowledge that the wisdom and power which were in him proceeded from God, and made so ill a use of his presence, which was the reason that he wrought few miracles in that place. Thus the prejudices and wickedness of men make them neglect the greatest advantages, at the time when they are offered to them; it likewise shews, that if God deprives them of his grace, it is because they are so little sensible of it, and because they put obstacles in their own way. Upon the mission of the apostles it must be observed, 1. That *Jesus Christ*, in his wisdom and goodness towards the *Jews*, sent the apostles throughout *Judea*, to declare the coming of the kingdom of God; and to render their preaching more effectual, he gave them the power of doing miracles. 2. He forbade them to make any provision for that journey, because it was to be but short, and to inure them early to rely upon Providence. 3. He declared, that those who would not receive them, should be punished most severely; whereby we see the condemnation of those to whom God offers salvation, and who reject the proffers of his mercy. As to the death of *John* the Baptist, it was owing to the hatred that *Herodias* bore him, because he condemned her marriage with *Herod*; and to the base compliance of that prince, who sacrificed *John* the Baptist, for whom he had otherwise a veneration, looking upon him as a holy and just man, to the resentment of that impudent woman. In this event we perceive, that vicious persons commonly hate those who reprove them for their disorderly lives; and that very great evils spring from impurity, as well as from the compliance which people shew for the wicked, and from rash paths. It is nevertheless to be noted, that it pleased God to suffer *John* the Baptist to lose his life after this manner, that the *Jews* might be prepared for that which was to befall our Lord, of whom this holy prophet was the forerunner. It is likewise a thing worthy of attention, that *Herod*, who was of the sect of the Sadducees, who did not believe a resurrection, should imagine

that *John* the Baptist, who had been beheaded by his order, was come to life again; this shews that the wicked and unbelievers have no fixed or settled notions; that a guilty conscience is always in fear; and that wicked men, in the horror of their remorse, acknowledge truths which they before denied, and which are contrary to their avowed sentiments.

CHAP. VI. 30—56.

I. OUR Lord feeds five thousand people after a miraculous manner. II. His disciples being exposed to a storm, he goes to them walking upon the sea. III. He cures many diseases after he arrived at the country of *Genesareth*.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are here to observe in the first place the goodness of our Lord, who, seeing the condition of the people that followed him, was moved with compassion towards them; and bestowed upon them, besides spiritual food for their souls, nourishment also for their bodies, by a wonderful multiplication of the loaves. There is one circumstance which particularly distinguishes this miracle from the rest: which is, that this miracle was wrought in behalf of a great multitude, whereas the rest were of a private nature; which must make this the more remarkable. He afterwards manifested the same goodness, as well as power, when his disciples being in danger of perishing by a tempest, he went to them walking upon the sea, and made the storm to cease. This new miracle it seems was necessary more fully to convince his disciples of his power; since, as the Evangelist remarks, they have not sufficiently attended to his former miracles. Thus our Lord was pleased to confirm their faith, which was still weak, and convince them more and more that he was the Son of God. What happened on this occasion, should produce in us a firm belief of the unbounded power of Christ, and of the care he takes of his servants;

vants ; there being no danger which he cannot deliver them from, no affliction which has not in the end an happy issue, which makes dangers and afflictions the greatest proofs of his love. Finally, When we read that they brought to *Christ*, from all parts, the sick and diseased, and that they were all healed, even by the bare touch of his garment ; we ought to believe, that if he thus displayed his power for the comfort and cure of those that were presented to him, he is not less disposed to save all such as seek from him the cure of their souls ; and this should encourage us to have recourse with confidence to our gracious Redeemer, to be assisted by him in all our wants.

CHAP. VII.

THIS chapter has two parts : I. The Pharisees complaining that the disciples of *Christ* did not wash themselves according to the custom of the *Jews*, he reproaches them for violating the commandments of God, by teaching, that if a child had consecrated and devoted to God that substance wherewith he might have assisted his father and mother, he was obliged strictly to fulfil such a vow, nor was any longer at liberty with that substance to relieve his parents in their wants. He afterwards teaches the people and his disciples what it was that defiled a man, and what did not defile him. II. After this he goes to the coasts of *Tyre* and *Sidon*, and there heals the daughter of a *Canaanitish* woman ; and returning into *Galilee*, he heals a man that was deaf and dumb.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may learn from hence, I. That it is hypocrisy scrupulously to practise ceremonies and customs established by men, and to violate the divine laws and duties which God has more expressly commanded ; that the true service of God consists in keeping his commandments, but that he abhors the worship of hypocrites, who pretend to honour him with their mouths,

mouths, and with the outside of religion, whilst their heart is defiled and far from him. II. This discourse of our Saviour teaches us, that it is the will of God that children should honour and assist their parents, and that nothing can excuse them from this duty. III. That those oaths and vows, whereby people oblige themselves to do things contrary to the law of God, do not bind the conscience; and that it would be a sin to perform them. But above all, *Christ* teaches us, IV. That what defiles us before God, is properly that which proceeds from the heart, such as evil thoughts, impure and unjust desires; the hatred of our neighbour; envy, pride, and haughtiness; and other passions of the like nature; that these evil thoughts are real sins, being the source of all the wicked actions that men commit. When *Christ* gave these instructions, he said, *Hear and understand*. This advice denotes the importance of this doctrine, and obliges us above all things to avoid that which defiles the soul, and to acquire true purity, which is that of the heart. On the second part of this chapter it must be observed, that our Lord being desired by a woman that was a Gentile to heal her daughter, refused at first to grant her request, telling her, it was not fit to give the childrens bread to dogs; that is, to work those miracles in favour of the Gentiles, who are strangers, which *Christ* only did for the sake of the *Jews*, that were the people of God, and as it were the children of his family. Our Lord said this, because the Gentiles were not yet to be made equal to the *Jews*. But that woman obtained at last from him, by her profound humility, perseverance, faith, and zeal, the favour which she desired of him. We may see by this history, that the heathens were not excluded from the grace of God, and that they were to be soon received into it, as well as the *Jews*. We see likewise that prayers, attended with humility and zeal, have great efficacy; that if they do not obtain for us at first all that we desire of God, he deals thus with us, to stir us up, and to give us more lively sentiments of our own unworthiness, but
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that at last we obtain every thing of him by perseverance. Finally, We discover in this, and the other miracle of healing the deaf and dumb man, the facility and supreme authority wherewith *Christ* cured all sorts of diseases, and that great charity which induced him, upon all occasions, to comfort and assist the miserable, and to do good to all.

CHAP. VIII. 1—21.

I. *CHRIST* feeds miraculously four thousand men.
 II. He refuses to give a sign, which the Pharisees required of him. And, III. Warns his disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of *Herod*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WE are here to admire the wonderful and gracious manner in which our Lord fed several thousand men with seven loaves and a few fishes, as he had done a little before; whereby he was pleased not only to provide for the nourishment of their bodies, but likewise to dispose them to receive from him the true food, which is that of the soul. Further, The great multitude for whom our Lord multiplied the loaves and fishes, and the broken pieces that remained, with which the apostles filled seven baskets, are two circumstances which served to confirm the certainty of the miracle, and make it known. II. We see that the Pharisees having desired our Saviour to shew them a sign from heaven, he would not gratify them in it. His using them in that manner was very just, since having already done so many other miracles, which they had made no advantage of, such a sign could have been of no use to them, nor would they have been affected with it. God, who answers the desires of the sincere and honest heart, justly forsakes those who resist the truth; and when he has done enough to convince men, he is not bound to do any more; and it would be in vain for him to employ new means to convince men whose
 blind-

blindness is voluntary, and the effect of their wickedness. III. The apostles having forgot to take bread, our Lord warns them against the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of *Herod*, who was of the sect of the Sadducees; this was as much as to say, that they should beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees, who were hypocrites, and only adhered to the traditions and externals of religion; and the impious opinions of the Sadducees that denied the resurrection, and maintained other pernicious errors. Thus did this Divine Saviour, in his great wisdom, take occasion from ordinary occurrences to give his disciples wholesome lessons of instruction. What he says at this time teaches us to avoid, with the utmost care, all kind of false doctrines and dangerous notions, and especially such as may lead us into superstition and hypocrisy, or into irreligion and infidelity.

CHAP. VIII. 22—38.

I. *CHRIST* cures a blind man. II. He asks his disciples what opinion the people had of him, and what they themselves thought of him; whereupon *St. Peter* confessed him to be the Son of God. III. Our Lord foretels his death. IV. He exhorts his disciples to be prepared for sufferings, and to make an open profession of the Gospel before men; and to engage them to it, he shews them that it was the only means to avoid the loss of their souls.

REFLECTIONS.

I. IN the healing of the blind man there is this particular observable, viz. That our Lord did not heal him all at once, but did it by degrees. He proceeded in that manner to try his faith, which was not perhaps strong enough; to demonstrate his power to him in a more sensible manner by the progress of his cure, and to let the people see, that in not working his miracles after the same manner always, he could display the divine power that was in him, either all at once, or by little

little and little; which shews that he was able to work miracles as he thought convenient. II. We see in the second place, that *Christ* was esteemed among the *Jews* as a great prophet, but that *St. Peter*, and the other apostles, looked upon him as the Son of God. This is likewise what all of us ought to believe in our heart, and confess with our mouth, if we would be saved. Nevertheless, our Lord forbids his disciples to publish that he was the Messiah, because he was not to take upon him openly that character before his death. III. Upon the prediction which *Christ* made of his own death, it is to be observed, that he warned his disciples of it, that they might be prepared gradually for that great event which they did not expect, and which might otherwise have staggered their faith. It was to make them understand the necessity of this, that he so severely rebuked *St. Peter*, who, being possessed with the *Jewish* prejudices, could not conceive that the Messiah, the Son of God, was to die. But what this apostle could not comprehend at that time, is plain to us, who know that the death of *Christ* is the means that God has been pleased to use for our redemption. IV. And lastly, *Christ* has taught us, that those who would be his disciples must deny themselves, and be prepared to suffer, and even to die for the Gospel, if thereunto called; that there is nothing of so great importance to us, as the saving our souls; and that we ought to make an open profession of godliness and truth, if we would have him own us for his true disciples, and if we desire to be received into his glory when he comes to judge the world. Thus did *Jesus Christ* instruct men in the most important duties of religion, and set before them the most powerful motives to engage them to the practice of them.

CHAP. IX. 1—29.

THIS part of the ninth chapter contains three things: I. The transfiguration of *Jesus Christ*. II. The explanation which he gave his disciples of the

the prediction of the coming of *Elias*. III. The healing of the lunatic, whom the apostles could not cure.

REFLECTIONS.

I. OUR Lord shewed to three of his apostles the glory of his transfiguration, that he might fully convince them, by this glorious appearance, that he was the Son of God, and also to strengthen their faith, which was like to be shaken in a short time by his death. The appearing of *Moses* and *Elias* on this occasion shewed, that *Jesus* was that great Redeemer whose coming the prophets had foretold; and that he far excelled the greatest of the prophets, among whom *Moses* and *Elias* were the chief. Besides this, God declared, by a voice from heaven, that *Jesus Christ* was his beloved Son. The voice which God caused to be heard from heaven upon that occasion, teaches us, that our Lord is that great prophet whom all men are bound to hear and to obey. This transfiguration of *Christ* is also an image of the glory wherein he shall appear at the last day; and the presence of *Moses* and *Elias* proves, that those holy men lived after their departure out of this world, and that there is a state of happiness reserved for the righteous after this life. II. Our Lord informed his disciples on this occasion, that *John* the Baptist is that *Elias* who was to come, according to the prophecy of *Malachi*. The name of *Elias* was given to the forerunner of the Messiah, because, like that prophet, he was to reform the manners of men, and to establish the service of God. The honourable mention our Saviour makes of *John* the Baptist, obliges us to acknowledge the dignity of the person of that great prophet, to reflect seriously upon the design of his ministry, and to submit to his doctrine, as well as that of *Jesus Christ*, who is still greater than his forerunner. III. In the cure of the lunatic, whom the apostles could not cure, because they were not sufficiently persuaded that they were able to work that miracle in the name of *Jesus Christ*, we may remark,

remark, that the faith of the apostles was as yet very weak: but that our Lord, seeing the deplorable condition of the young man, and having respect to the faith and tears of his father, healed him perfectly, and that only by a word. What *Christ* said to his apostles on this occasion shews us, that the power of working miracles was to be obtained of God by faith, prayer, and fasting. These means being not less necessary to resist temptation, and to procure us the all-powerful assistance of God's grace, we ought carefully to practise them.

CHAP. IX. 30—51.

I. OUR Lord warns his disciples of his approaching death. II. He reproves their disputing who should be the greatest in the kingdom of the Messiah, and teaches them humility, by placing a little child in the midst of them. III. He blames St. *John*, and his other disciples, for opposing a man who cast out devils in his name, told them that they ought not to offend nor discourage any of those that believe in him. IV. He exhorts them to avoid every thing that might be a scandal, or an occasion of falling, either to themselves or others, threatening such as do not avoid thus giving offence, with the pains of hell: he represents to them, that being the salt of the earth, they ought to endeavour after the improvement and edification of all men, particularly taking care to discourage no one, to entertain sentiments of charity towards all, and to live together in peace and unity.

REFLECTIONS.

WE must consider, I. That if the apostles did not comprehend what our Lord said concerning his death, it was because they could not conceive how the Messiah should die and suffer in a cruel and ignominious manner. II. The dispute that arose among them who should be the greatest in the kingdom of the Messiah, was owing to the opinion they had entertained

tained that his kingdom should be a temporal kingdom, and like the kingdoms of this world. *Christ* undeceived them, by setting before them a little child; the design of which was, to inspire them with humble sentiments, and to teach them not to affect the pre-eminence over each other, nor to despise any one. This lesson concerns all Christians, who ought to banish from their hearts all proud and haughty thoughts, and to become like children in meekness, innocence, and humility. III. It is to be observed, that our Lord reproves his disciples, because they would have hindered a man who did not follow them, from casting out devils in the name of *Jesus Christ*. From whence we ought to learn, not to reject any who profess to love the Lord *Jesus*, and to believe him: but on the contrary, to look upon them as brethren, to cherish them, and join ourselves to them. This is what he shews yet more expressly when he says, that it is a very great sin to despise or offend any of his disciples, even though they should betray some weakness, or might appear contemptible to the world. Lastly, Our Saviour earnestly exhorts us, and with the severest threatenings, to resist every thing that may draw us into sin, resolutely to renounce whatever is most dear to us, to mortify our inclinations, and even to undergo the greatest troubles, rather than to fall ourselves, or to make others fall into sin, and thereby expose ourselves and them to be cast into hell, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

CHAP. X. 1—31.

CHRIST does three things: I. He answers the Pharisees, who questioned with him about divorces, and told them, that the custom which prevailed among the *Jews*, of putting away their wives for every cause, was contrary to the institution of marriage. II. He blesses young children. III. He answers a rich young man who had asked him what he must do to be saved; upon which occasion he says, that riches would hinder
many

many people from believing in him; but that he would abundantly reward those that should forsake their goods, and all that was dearest to them, to follow him.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may make this general observation upon what our Saviour says about marriage: That divorce, as practised by the *Jews*, was an irregularity which God did not approve, but which however was tolerated, because of the carnal humour of that people, and of their natural inclination to disobedience; but that these divorces ought not to be suffered among Christians, no more than several other things of a like nature which God bore with formerly; that the laws of marriage are inviolable, that they equally bind the man and the woman, and therefore the Son of God having settled the laws of marriage again upon the same foot they were at the beginning, nothing but adultery can justify a divorce, and the liberty of marrying again. The ceremony of imposition of hands, which *Christ* practised with respect to little children, and the prayer he made for them, convinces us that children are dear to him; that it is a practice very agreeable to his will to dedicate them to God by baptism and prayer; and that the kingdom of heaven is reserved for those only who, like children, are meek and innocent, and untainted with the love of the world, or any of its vanities. We may learn from what passed between *Christ* and the rich young man, that to enter into eternal life, - we must keep the commandments of God; and that besides, we ought on some occasions to forsake all that we possess in this world; and that in general, Christians ought not to set their hearts upon riches; and that if God bestows them upon us, we should employ them to charitable purposes. We gather moreover from the discourse of our Lord, that this renunciation of worldly goods, as hard as it may seem at first, is not impossible, no more than our
other

other duties; and that those who have thus renounced the good things of this life, as the apostles did formerly, shall be abundantly rewarded, both here and hereafter. Lastly, The example of this young man, who had something good in him, and for which, *Christ* loved him, but who was discouraged when our Saviour told him that he must dispose of his goods, shews, that it may happen, that people who have good intentions, and some good qualities, may, nevertheless, fail of salvation, if they have not courage enough to do all that is required of them, in order to obtain it; if they will not renounce certain ruling passions, which obstruct their salvation, particularly the love of riches, and a fondness for the things of this world.

CHAP. X. 32—53.

I. **O**UR Lord warns his disciples of his death and resurrection. II. Returns an answer to *James* and *John*, who fancying, like the rest of the *Jews*, that the Messiah was to have a glorious reign upon earth, begged of him the chief dignities in his kingdom. III. He restores sight to a blind man near *Jericho*.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may consider here in the first place, that the time of *Christ's* death drawing nigh, he revealed more plainly to his apostles that he was to be crucified, and to rise again; but they were troubled and amazed at this discourse, because they expected to see their master reign on earth with glory. In this we discover, on one hand, the wisdom and goodness of our Lord, who was pleased thus to prepare his disciples for that which was to befall him; and on the other hand, that those disciples did still labour under great prejudices; and that they knew not yet what he was to do to save mankind. In the next place, we must attend to what *Christ* said to St. *James* and St. *John*, who thought of being highly distinguished in his kingdom, that in-

stead

stead of expecting to be raised to great dignities, they should be prepared to drink of the same cup, and to be baptised with the same baptism as he was; that is to say, to pass through very great sufferings, and even submit to death itself; and that therefore they ought to be humbled, and to become the servants of one another, after the example of their Lord, who came into the world only to serve and to suffer. These lessons, and this great example of humility, concern us as well as the apostles; and we ought to set them continually before us, as the rule of our sentiments, and of our behaviour. Lastly, The cure which our Lord granted to the blind man, who implored his assistance with so much fervency, is a fresh proof of his power and goodness; and we may infer from it, that if he was so ready to assist the unfortunate, he is yet more disposed to save all such as call upon him with humility, and that seek of him eternal life.

CHAP. XI.

I. *JESUS CHRIST* makes his royal entry into *Jerusalem*. II. He drives out of the temple those that profaned it by selling doves and other creatures for the sacrifices, and by changing of money. III. He causes the fig-tree to wither by his word. And IV. He answers the Pharisees who required an account of his authority.

REFLECTIONS.

I. IT is to be observed, that our Lord made his royal entry into *Jerusalem* a few days before his death, to shew, that he was that glorious king, that Redeemer whose coming the prophets had foretold, but which he avoided to declare publicly during his life. But the manner wherein he made his entry, riding upon a young ass, shewed his meekness and humility; and was a token that his kingdom no way resembled the kingdoms of this world. Now as we do much better understand the glory of *Jesus Christ*, and the nature of

of his kingdom, than the people who attended him on that solemn occasion, we are the more engaged to rejoice and praise God, for having sent us this great Saviour, and for the manifestation of his kingdom. II. It must be observed, that the same day on which *Christ* made his royal entry, he went to the temple and drove out those that profaned it, to make the *Jews* sensible of his divine authority; and, by acting thus as master in the temple, to shew that he was the Son of God. It is likewise a warning to us not to profane, either by hypocrisy, impiety or irreverence, the places where God is worshipped and called upon. As for the miracle of the withered fig-tree, we must know this tree was of a particular kind, one of those fig trees which preserved all the winter their leaves and their figs, and whose fruit grew ripe in spring. *Jesus* therefore seeing this fig-tree which had leaves, and which might have had figs too, went to seek fruit thereon, though it was not the season for common figs; this he did that he might take occasion, by this miracle, to make it wither, and to shew his disciples, that faith and prayer obtain all things from God; but he expressly warns us, that prayer must be made in the spirit of love, and that when we offer up our prayers to God, we should previously forgive one another. The answer our Lord returned to the Pharisees, who asked him whence he had his authority, was to convince them that their blindness and unbelief were wilful, and that his authority proceeded from heaven, as well as that of *John* the Baptist; but we should be yet more guilty than those Pharisees, if, knowing that *John* the Baptist and *Jesus Christ* were sent from God, and professing to believe the same, we should not submit to the doctrine which they preached, and above all, to the authority of the Son of God, our Lord *Jesus Christ*.

CHAP. XII. 1—27.

I. *CHRIST* proposes the parable of the husbandmen.

II. Answers the question that was put to him about paying tribute to the emperor. And, III. Another question which the Sadducees asked him about the resurrection.

REFLECTIONS.

THE meaning of the parable of the husbandmen is, that the *Jews*, after having rejected and persecuted the prophets, would put to death the Son of God, for which reason God would take away his covenant from them, and destroy them; that he would cause the Gospel to be preached to the Gentiles, and that *Christ*, who had been rejected by the chief among the *Jews*, should become the head and king of the church, and be exalted to the right hand of God. Two reflections may be made upon this parable: The first is, That all that *Jesus* had foretold, was fulfilled soon after by the destruction of *Jerusalem*, by the calling of the Gentiles, and by the establishment of the kingdom of our Lord. The second, That as God severely punished the ingratitude of the *Jews*, he will more severely punish the infidelity of those, who, living under the Gospel, despise the offers of his grace, and disobey his laws. We may see by the answer that *Christ* made concerning the tribute, that he discovered the snare which the Pharisees laid for him, and avoided it by telling them to *render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's*. From hence we should gather, that we are bound to submit to the authority of kings and princes, and to yield them all that is due to them; and likewise to acquit ourselves inviolably of those duties which we are bound by our religion to pay to God. Our Lord had at that time a remarkable dispute with the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection of the dead. The question they put to him upon the subject he answered in such

a manner as confounded them, and proved them to be in a great error. This passage is well worth our attention: in it *Christ* teaches us the certainty of the resurrection, and the state of those that shall rise again; which ought to strengthen us in the belief of this great and comfortable truth, and induce us to imitate the faith and piety of the Patriarchs, since the Lord has declared himself to be their God, even after their death; and it should likewise teach us to live after a pure and spiritual manner, that we may partake of the glory of a happy resurrection.

CHAP. XII. 28—44.

I. *CHRIST* answers one of the Scribes who asked him which was the greatest commandment. II. He asks the Pharisees, how the Messiah could be at the same time the Son and Lord of *David*. III. He condemns the hypocrisy of the Scribes. IV. He praises the offering of a poor widow.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WE have here a very important lesson, namely, that the chief commandment, and that which includes all the rest, is to love God with all our heart, and to love our neighbour as ourselves; that this is most acceptable to God, and worth more than all the ceremonies, and all the external duties of religion. Those who rightly understand this truth, and labour, above all things, to fix in their hearts this love of God, and of their neighbour, are in a fit disposition to enter into the kingdom of heaven, as our Lord has expressly declared. II. Our Lord asking the Pharisees, How *David* could call the Messiah his Lord, in the CXth Psalm, since he was his Son; they were put to silence, and could not answer him a word. By this question, he was minded to make them sensible of their ignorance, but would not explain the difficulty, because they would not have believed what he said to them, and because he would not then speak openly of the dignity

dignity of his person ; but this question has nothing obscure in it with respect to us, since we know *Christ* is the son of *David*, because, as man, he descended from him ; but that he was his Lord, as the Son of God. III. The reproaches *Christ* cast upon the Scribes, shews us, that pride, hypocrisy, and covetousness, are most odious vices, especially in those that teach others, and make great professions of piety. IV. The judgment which our Lord passed upon the offering of a poor widow, that cast two little pieces of money into a chest, where they kept that which was given for the use of the temple, and for divine service, is a proof that God does chiefly regard the heart and intention ; and that the contributions and alms of poor people, though they are of little value, are as well received as those of the rich, when the poor give as much as their poverty will allow them, and when they do it out of a principle of piety and charity.

CHAP. XIII.

CHRIST speaks of the signs that were to precede the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the end of the world. He says there would arise false prophets, and false Messiahs ; that there would be wars, famines, and all sorts of calamities ; that his disciples would be persecuted, and the Gospel preached throughout the world. He foretels them that the idolaters should soon enter into *Judea*, and besiege *Jerusalem* ; that there would appear every where tokens of the wrath of God ; that then the Son of Man would manifest himself in his glory ; and that these things should happen before that generation passed away. He exhorts his disciples to depart from *Jerusalem* at that time, to hold themselves ready, and to watch for his coming ; and to induce them so to do, says, that the exact time of his coming was uncertain.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS discourse of the Son of God offers to our mind three principal reflections. I. That the event

did fully verify all these predictions of our Lord, soon after his departure out of this world, forasmuch as several deceivers or impostors appeared at that time; the *Jews* were afflicted with war, and scourges of every kind; the Apostles and Christians were persecuted; the Gospel spread in several parts of the world; *Jerusalem* besieged and destroyed by the *Romans*, and the Christians that came out of it preserved from that desolation; and lastly, that all these things happened before all the men that lived in *Christ's* time were dead, as he had positively foretold. All these are so many undeniable proofs of the truth and divinity of the Gospel, and visible tokens of the divine vengeance upon the *Jews*. II. This ought to convince us, that what *Christ* said no less positively about his last coming, about the end of the world, the universal judgment, and the punishment of wicked men, shall not fail to come to pass. III. The third reflection is, that the time of his coming is unknown to us, as well as the time of our own death, God having concealed it from us in his wisdom and goodness; that therefore we ought to think upon it continually, and to prepare ourselves for it by prayer, by a holy life, and by the practice of every good work, serving God faithfully every one in his calling, that we be not surprized by that terrible day. This is what our Lord himself exhorts us to, in these words, at the end of this discourse, which shew too the use and design of it. *Take heed to yourselves, watch and pray, for you know not when your Lord will come; and what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.*

CHAP. XIV. 1—31.

ST. Mark begins here the history of our Saviour's passion, and relates, I. How a woman anointed him with a precious oil. II. How *Judas* promised the *Jews* to betray his Master to them. III. The celebration of the passover the evening before his death, and how, during supper, he foretold the treachery of *Judas*,

Judas, and *St. Peter's* denial of him, and the institution of the Lord's Supper.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE first reflection to be made relates to the action of that woman, who poured on *Jesus* a precious ointment. Since *Christ* approved of that action, commended her zeal and good intentions, and declared, that the remembrance of it should be perpetuated in the church, we cannot doubt but he will likewise approve all that we shall do for his honour; his reply to those who would have had that ointment sold, and the money given to the poor, teaches us to avoid rash judgments, and not to blame too hastily the actions of other people, when they may proceed from a good principle; and that we ought to take care of the poor, and embrace every opportunity of doing good to them.

II. The example of *Judas* shews, that covetousness blinds and hardens men to such a degree, that it puts them upon committing all sorts of crimes. III. Since *Christ* foretold the treachery of *Judas*, it appeared from thence, that nothing was concealed from him; that he knew the hearts and designs of men; that he foresaw what was to happen to himself, and consequently that all his sufferings were voluntary. IV. *Christ* celebrated the passover with his disciples, according to the custom of the *Jews*, to shew, that he strictly observed every thing that was prescribed by the law of God; but he chiefly did it, because his design was to institute the Lord's Supper, and to substitute it in the place of the *Jewish* passover. This ought to inspire us with a very great respect for this divine ceremony, which our Lord has established as a memorial of his death, and to engage us to celebrate it with faith and thanksgiving, according to his intentions. Finally, The prediction that *St. Peter* should deny him, supposes our Lord to have an entire knowledge of the heart of man; and what he said to that apostle, who vowed he would never forsake him, ought to fill

us with a distrust of ourselves, which is of great use; and induce us to improve the warning which God gives us, and to seek in humility, in watching, and in prayer, for that constancy and courage so necessary to secure us from being surprised by temptation.

CHAP. XIV. 32—72.

I. *St. Mark* relates here what *Christ* suffered in the garden. II. How he was apprehended by the *Jews* who were conducted by *Judas*. III. What passed while *Jesus* was before the council. IV. *St. Peter's* fall, and his repentance;

REFLECTIONS.

THE extreme anguish which our Lord felt in the garden is one of the most remarkable circumstances of his passion. It discovers very plainly to us, that he suffered to atone for the sins of mankind; and we may judge from thence how great is the horror of sin, and with what despair the wicked will be seized, when they are rejected of God, and undergo the punishment due to their sins. We ought next, in imitation of *Jesus Christ*, who in his agony prayed with so much fervour, and with so perfect a submission to the will of his Father, to call upon God with perseverance when we are under affliction; and at the same time, with an entire resignation to his will, saying, *Lord, not what I will, but what thou wilt.* *Jesus Christ* gives us all a very important piece of advice, when he says, *Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation; the spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.* *Christ* assures us thereby, that the infallible way not to fall into sin, is to distrust our own weakness, and to watch and pray; but that we are drawn away by temptations as soon as ever we neglect these means. By the manner in which our Lord was taken, and by what he then said to *Judas*, and to the *Jews*, it appears plainly, that of his own free choice, and by the divine permission, he was taken and condemned; this is another
powerful

powerful inducement for us to love our Saviour most fervently, who has been pleased to expose himself thus freely to death for our sakes, and to engage us to acquiesce and submit to the will of the Lord in all things. Observe, that *Jesus* appeared before the council; that he was examined; and that witnesses were heard against him; but could not be convicted of any crime, notwithstanding all the pains which his enemies took to find out accusations and false witnesses against him; and was condemned only because he confessed himself to be the Son of God; which was so ordered by Providence, to evince the perfect innocence of our Lord. That great meekness, and that spirit of humility and patience, which our Lord manifested in his discourses, and in suffering all the indignities they put upon him, is a very sensible proof of his submission to the will of his Father, and of his love towards us, and a pattern of patience, to which we ought to conform ourselves. We have likewise seen, how our Lord owned that he was the Son of God; and said that the *Jews* should see him sitting at the right hand of God, and coming in his glory. This was fulfilled quickly after, when the *Jews* were destroyed, and when they saw the kingdom of our Lord established in the world. We ought also to improve, to our own advantage, the fall of *St. Peter*, who denied his Master, after such a solemn protestation that he would never forsake him. Every body, even those who have great zeal and good intentions, may learn from hence, how great our weakness is, and that we ought to be upon our guard against temptation; and the repentance of this apostle, which was so speedy and so bitter, teaches us, that when we stumble, or have fallen, we ought to rise again immediately, be heartily grieved for our sin, and repair it by having recourse to the mercy of God, and by a sincere conversion and reformation.

CHAP. XV.

I. *CHRIST* is brought before *Pilate*, who, after having endeavoured to deliver him, consents at last to his death. II. He is crucified, dies, and is buried.

REFLECTIONS.

IN what passed before *Pilate*, there are four things chiefly to be observed. I. The injustice and rage of the *Jews*, which nothing could appease, and who so earnestly solicited the condemnation of *Jesus*, that they preferred even a murderer before him. II. The humility, silence, and patience of our Lord, who submitted himself to the judgment of *Pilate*, and underwent, without complaining, all the unjust treatment he received from them. These are strong proofs of his love for men, whom he desired to save; and of his submission to the will of his Father; and it is likewise an example of resignation for such as are exposed to sufferings, or to the injustice of men. III. It is to be observed, that the innocence of *Christ* was fully acknowledged by *Pilate*, which aggravated the guilt of the *Jews*, as well as that of the governor. And, lastly, That that unjust judge, after having refused to do what the *Jews* required, and after having endeavoured to save the life of *Christ*, did at length pronounce the sentence of death against him. *Pilate* knew what justice required of him; he had even good intentions, but wanted courage and resolution to follow them. Thus do they who sin against conviction: they know their duty, and have some good inclination towards it; but after they have resisted temptation for a while, do at last yield to it for fear of men, and out of views of policy and interest, or for some other principle of the like nature; whereas good men do always adhere to their duty, and pursue with steadiness the dictates of their conscience, without turning aside for any consideration whatever. In the history
of

of our Lord's passion, we are chiefly to consider the torments of that cruel punishment he underwent; the shame and ignominy to which he was exposed, by being crucified between two thieves; the outrages and insults which the Pharisees and priests offered to him whilst he was fastened to the cross; and, lastly, The death which put an end to his sufferings. We discover in all this the profound humiliation of the Son of God; the great love that he has shewn for us, and an example of most perfect patience. Wherefore we ought to look upon his death as the price of our redemption, and the support of our faith; to love this kind Saviour, who has so loved us; to renounce sin, which he came to destroy by his death; and to learn from him to bear our cross, and to suffer patiently when we are called thereto. The history of *Christ's* burial, and the enquiry *Pilate* made before he would grant his body to *Joseph*, prove that he was really dead, and consequently that he really rose again. The consideration of his burial is likewise very proper to disperse the fear that we may entertain of death, and of the grave, and to raise our minds to the expectation of a better life.

CHAP. XVI.

I. IN this last chapter of *St. Mark*, we see the history of the resurrection of *Jesus Christ*. II. The orders he gave his apostles before he left the world. And, III. His ascension.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT is contained in this chapter establishes the truth and certainty of the resurrection of *Jesus Christ*, since it was confirmed by the apparition and testimony of the angels, and that our Lord was seen first by the women that went to his sepulchre, and afterwards by the apostles, at several times. We ought to consider next, how glorious this resurrection was, God having been pleased to send angels to open the tomb of our
Lord,

Lord, and to declare to men that he was risen again. This wonderful event proves, therefore, that *Jesus* was the Son of God, and is an assurance to us, that he has perfectly reconciled us to God by the sacrifice of himself, and that he has overcome death and the grave. This resurrection is likewise a certain earnest of our own, which ought to fill us with comfort and confidence, and powerfully excite us to holiness. The command that *Christ* gave his apostles, to go and preach, and baptize throughout the world, and the power with which he endued them to work all sorts of miracles, shew that he spake as king of the church, and Lord of all things; and the event agreeing with what he had said, does undeniably prove, that he is exalted to a supreme power, and that the Gospel is a divine and heavenly doctrine. We may observe particularly, that *Christ* speaks of baptism after such a manner, as proves that this ceremony is of divine institution; but that he declares, at the same time, that baptism will not save us, unless it be attended with a truth faith. Lastly, the ascension of *Christ* obliges us to consider him as one who has a sovereign authority over all things, and who must be our judge. And since he is likewise gone to heaven, to prepare a place for us there, we may aspire and endeavour, by holiness and by good works, to attain to that glorious mansion into which our Redeemer is entered, and where he is seated at the right hand of God,

The end of the Gospel according to St. MARK.

THE
G O S P E L
ACCORDING TO
ST. L U K E.

ARGUMENT.

This Gospel was written about twenty years after the ascension of Jesus Christ, by St. Luke, who was the disciple and companion of St. Paul, and followed him in his travels.

CHAP. I. 1—38.

I. **A**N angel appearing to *Zechariah* foretels the birth of *John* the Baptist. II. And six months after, the same angels was sent to the Blessed Virgin, to foretel the birth of our Lord.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

WHAT we have been reading relates to the birth of *John* the Baptist, and his ministry. As to his birth, it may be observed, that there was something extraordinary and supernatural in it, since he proceeded from a father advanced in years, and from a mother that was old and barren; that God gave notice of his birth by an angel; and that *Zechariah* the father,

father, who could not believe it, was assured of it by a miracle, which God wrought in striking him dumb. All which tended to shew, that *John* the Baptist was to be an extraordinary person, and sent from God; this birth was likewise a prelude to that of *Jesus Christ*, which would be yet more miraculous, since he was to be born of a virgin. As to the ministry of *John* the Baptist, we ought seriously to consider what the angel said to *Zechariah*, revealing to him what his son was one day to be; namely, that he would be filled with the Holy Ghost, that he should go before the face of the Lord, and that, like another *Elias*, he would persuade men to turn unto God, and to live a life of righteousness by the severity of his own life, by his authority, by his great zeal, and by the power of his exhortations; and that by this means he would prepare them to receive the Messiah, of whom he was to be the forerunner. Let us learn from hence this important lesson, that the design of God in sending *John* the Baptist, and afterwards *Jesus Christ*, was to bring about the conversion of mankind, to withdraw them from their sins, and make them a holy people, and given to good works. In what the angel said to the Virgin *Mary*, when he acquainted her that she was to be the mother of *Jesus Christ*, we may chiefly remark these two things: One, that the body of our Lord was formed of the substance of the Virgin, by the operation of the Holy Ghost; and the other, that this *Jesus*, who was to be born of *Mary*, would be the Son of God, that he would be exalted to very great glory, and that he would reign for ever. From whence we may collect, that the birth of *Christ* was miraculous, and entirely free from pollution; that he did really assume our nature, and become man like unto us; but that he was also perfectly holy and separated from sinners. Lastly, It is to be observed, that though the Blessed Virgin could at first scarce believe what the angel told her, yet when she had heard the message more fully explained, she then no longer doubted but what had been declared to her from

from God would certainly come to pass. This was a proof of the faith and piety of the Blessed Virgin, and a pattern to us how we should believe the promises of God, made to us in his word; being fully persuaded that he will never want power nor means to bring about his promises, how difficult soever the execution of them may appear to us.

CHAP. I. 39—80.

I. **ST. Luke** gives us an account of the Blessed Virgin's visit to *Elizabeth*, and her song on this occasion. II. Of the birth of *John* the Baptist, and the song of his father *Zechariah*.

REFLECTIONS.

LET it here be considered, I. That the Blessed Virgin having been informed by the angel *Gabriel*, that her cousin *Elizabeth* had also miraculously conceived, went immediately to visit her, and was by this means more fully confirmed in a belief that the Messiah should be born of her, according to the message she had received from God. But what deserves chiefly to be taken notice of, is the song of *Mary*, on this occasion. In this song we see how she was transported with joy and gratitude at the sense of the favour God had done her, in making choice of her to be the mother of the Messiah. In it we discover her profound her humility, and at the same time her faith and firm persuasion that God was going to deliver his people, and to fulfil the promises he had made them of sending the Redeemer. This engages us to honour the memory of the Blessed Virgin, and to celebrate her happiness as she herself has described it; to imitate her piety, her faith, and her other virtues: to abase ourselves before God as she did, under the sense of his mercies, and of our own unworthiness, and praise him above all things, for having sent into the world *Christ* our Saviour, according to the promises made by the prophets, The birth of *John* the Baptist was

was attended with several very remarkable circumstances; *Zechariah* his father did then recover his speech by a miracle; the rumour of his son's birth was spread abroad, and all the people were in great expectation what that child would one day be. All these events were the dispensations of Providence, that the *Jews* might be prepared to look upon *John* the Baptist as one sent from God, to receive his preaching, and to believe his testimony concerning *Jesus Christ*. In the song which *Zechariah* did then pronounce by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, we may observe these three things: First, His joy, his gratitude, and thanks to God, that the time was come to redeem his people. Secondly, His extraordinary faith, since, though the Messiah was yet unborn, he was firmly convinced that he would shortly appear, and that his son would be his forerunner. Thirdly, *Zechariah* shews in this song the design of *Christ's* coming, when he says, *That we being delivered from the hands of our enemies, might serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life.* This should stir us up to bless God with *Zechariah*, and even more than he, for saving us by *Jesus Christ*, and to extol his mercy, as well as his faithfulness, and the truth of his promises. And since our Lord is come to consecrate us to the service of God, it is our duty to answer the design of his coming, by serving God faithfully, and by living in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life.

CHAP. II. 1—20.

WE have here the history of the birth of *Jesus Christ*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE first reflection we are to make upon the history of our Saviour's birth is, that the Messiah being to be born at *Bethlehem*, according to the prophecies, Providence conducted the Blessed Virgin from *Galilee*,

where she dwelt, to that city, by means of the decree of the emperor *Augustus*, who had ordered an account to be taken of the number of all his subjects, and that therefore every one should resort to the place of his birth. II. That our Lord was born in very poor and mean circumstances, being born in an inn, and laid in a manger; by which God was pleased as it were to declare beforehand, that *Christ* was not to live in pomp and glory, and that his kingdom would not be of this world, and that humility and poverty would be his character. III. For the same reason it was that the first persons who were honoured with the news of *Christ's* birth were shepherds, plain men, of an obscure condition, and not the rich and great. All these things are great lessons of humility to Christians. However, it must be observed, that this birth was rendered illustrious by the apparition of the angels, and by the song of those blessed spirits. It pleased God, moreover, that the shepherds should go to *Bethlehem* to see the child *Jesus*, and to inform the Holy Virgin of all the wonders they had seen and heard; and then that they should publish them all abroad, that the expectation of the *Jews* might be excited, and they prepared for the reception of *Jesus Christ*. All these circumstances of our Lord's birth ought to strengthen our faith, and fill us with joy and comfort; we ought especially to join our praises to those of the shepherds and holy angels, and bless God with them, that a Saviour is born unto us; and, by his birth, peace given to the earth, and the good will of God so clearly manifested towards men.

CHAP. II. 21—52.

ST. *Luke* relates, I. The circumcision of *Christ*, the presenting him in the temple, and the thanksgivings of *Simeon* and *Anna* the Prophets. II. He informs us in the next place, how *Christ*, being twelve years old, was found in the temple in the midst of the doctors.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may consider, I. In relation to what is here said about the circumcision of *Christ*, his presentation in the temple, the purification of the Virgin, and the offering which she made according to the custom, that God thought fit that all these things should be observed, after the birth of our Lord, because they were prescribed by the law, and that the *Jews* might not have any appearance of reason for rejecting him. II. The joy which *Simeon* and *Anna* the Prophets shewed at that time, and the praises which they publicly gave to God, are an argument of their faith and zeal, and that the birth of *Christ* is the most happy and the most salutary event that ever came to pass, and that therefore we ought to have a very joyful sense of it, and incessantly to bless the Lord for it; and the rather, because what *Simeon* said in his song, has been accomplished in us, and we are some of those Gentiles, to whom the Messiah came to give light and salvation. III. What *Simeon* said to the Blessed Virgin, of the glory of her Son, as well as of the contradictions and sufferings to which he should be exposed, tended to convince her, that the kingdom of *Christ* would not be a temporal kingdom, and to prepare her to see him rejected by the *Jews*, and put to death. As for us, we ought to learn from thence, that our Saviour was to be received by some, and rejected by others; and that if his coming be a blessing to such as receive him with faith, it is an occasion of scandal and destruction to unbelievers. IV. That which happened to *Christ* at the age of twelve years, when he was found in the temple in the midst of the doctors, is the only circumstance of his life, from his birth and return from *Egypt*, to the beginning of his ministry, which has been made known to us. This particular instance was recorded to shew, that there appeared in him, even from his earliest youth, extraordinary understanding, wisdom, and zeal, and that he was to be one day endowed with the spirit of God in an abundant manner.

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God was pleased thereby to begin to make him known to the *Jews*, and to dispose them to profit by his ministry, when he should exercise it among them.

CHAP. III.

THIS chapter contains three things: I. The preaching of *John* the Baptist. II. The baptism of *Jesus Christ*. And, III. His genealogy.

REFLECTIONS.

ST. *Luke* informs us here, that before the appearance of our Lord, *John* the Baptist was sent, as had been foretold by the prophets, to prepare the *Jews* for his reception; this he did by preaching repentance, and by exhorting the people to believe on him who was to come soon after; by baptizing those that received his doctrine, and by threatening the unbelieving and impenitent *Jews*, that although they were the children of *Abraham*, they should not escape the wrath to come, and that God could raise up other children to *Abraham*, even from the stones; which denoted that the Gentiles should be called in their stead. All this tended to make the *Jews* understand that the kingdom of the Messiah was shortly to be manifested; but that it was to be a spiritual and heavenly kingdom, and not an earthly kingdom, as they expected; and that no body would have any share in the advantages of that kingdom, but such as should give themselves up to holiness and to virtue. These instructions concern us as well as the *Jews*; they shew, that without amendment of life we cannot be the disciples of *Jesus Christ*; that he receives into his church and kingdom, only those who bring forth fruits meet for repentance. *John* the Baptist declares further, that to be in covenant with God, and to have a great appearance of zeal, signifies nothing; but that we must shew by the effects, and by our works, the sincerity of our faith and repentance; and that hardened and impenitent sinners shall no more escape divine vengeance than

hypocrites. The example of those who went to hear *John* the Baptist, and to ask his advice, teaches us our duty. It is the character of true penitents freely to confess their sins, and to apply for instruction as their needs require, and follow it with docility. Besides this, the different advice *John* the Baptist gave the people, the publicans and the soldiers, shews us, that every one ought faithfully to discharge the duties of his calling, and to avoid those sins and temptations to which it may expose him; particularly, that we ought to exercise charity, and to renounce covetousness, injustice, violence, and fraud. What we are to consider about the baptism of *Jesus Christ*, is, that God thought fit he should be baptized by *John*, and that upon this occasion the Holy Ghost came down upon him, and a voice was heard from heaven, that *John* the Baptist himself, the *Jews*, and all men, might consider our Lord as the Son of God, and as him whom they ought to obey. As to the genealogy of *Jesus Christ*, here set down by *St. Luke*, we must observe that it differs from that of *St. Matthew*, because *St. Matthew* gives us the genealogy of *Joseph*, the husband of the Holy Virgin, by *Solomon*, the son of king *David*; whereas *St. Luke* deduces the Virgin's pedigree by *Nathan*, who was likewise a son of *David*. *Jesus* passed for the son of *Joseph*, and was so in the eye of the law; but he descended from *Heli*, and was his son, that is, his grandson by *Mary* his mother, who was the daughter of *Heli*. Both these genealogies agree in making our Lord to descend from king *David*, and the patriarch *Abraham*, which was one of the characters of the Messiah.

CHAP. IV. 1—15.

THE Evangelist gives us here the history of our Saviour's fasting and temptation. And how he began the exercise of his ministry in *Galilee*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. OUR Saviour's fast was by way of preparation to the exercise of his ministry, in which he resembled *Moses*, who had also fasted forty days, when God gave him the law on mount *Sinai*. If *Jesus Christ* was pleased to fast, who had no need of mortification, we ought by no means to neglect so useful an exercise, who stand in so great need of abstinence and self denial.

II. We must know, that when the devil is said to tempt *Jesus*, the meaning is, that he had a mind to try whether *Jesus* was the Son of God, and that God permitted him to be thus tempted, before he began to preach the Gospel, and to work miracles; that the devil, being convinced that *Jesus* was really the Son of God, he might revere his power and obey his commands, when afterwards he should drive out devils from such as were possessed by them. The end therefore of this temptation was, to shew that our Lord *Jesus Christ* is the Son of God, and that he came into the world to destroy the kingdom of the devil. To this general consideration, we may add two particular ones: The first is, that we should resist all temptations, and especially such as lead us to distrust the divine assistance, or to presumption, or to the love of glory, and the good things of this world. The second consideration relates to the means of resisting temptation. The retreat of *Jesus Christ* into the wilderness, his fasting, and the manner in which he repelled the assaults of the devil, teach us, that retirement, fasting, prayer, and the word of God, are the most efficacious methods to overcome temptation, and to defeat the attempts of the enemies of our salvation.

CHAP. IV. 16—44.

I. OUR Lord being at *Nazareth* on a Sabbath-day, in the synagogue, read that prophecy of *Isaiah*, which described God's sending the Messiah, and filling him with his spirit, to declare to men, the glad tidings

tidings of salvation; and he shewed that that prophecy was fulfilled in his own person. Then he reproached the inhabitants of that city with their unbelief, which did so exasperate them, that they would have thrown him down headlong from a precipice; but he escaped their fury. II. He went from thence to *Capernaum*, where he cured a man possessed with a devil, as also the mother-in-law of St. *Peter*, and several other diseased persons; and went through *Galilee*, working miracles, and preaching the Gospel.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE meaning and design of our Lord's discourse in the synagogue of *Nazareth*, was, first, to shew, that since he was endued with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and published to men the glad tidings of salvation; the prophecy of *Isaiah*, quoted in this chapter, was fulfilled in him. II. *Jesus* was desirous to make the inhabitants of that city, among whom he had been brought up, sensible that their infidelity was the cause that he did not work the same miracles among them as he had elsewhere; in the same manner as formerly *Elijah* and *Elisha* had wrought miracles in favour of strangers, preferably to those of their own nation; whence we learn, that those who have the best means and the greatest opportunities of knowing the truth, often make the least use of them: and again, that God deprives those of his grace and salutary presence, who render themselves unworthy of it. In the resolution which the inhabitants of *Nazareth* took, to throw down *Christ* from a precipice, we have a fresh proof of that infidelity which he reproached them with, and of their ingratitude. Thus sinners are angry with those who tell them the truth, and reproach them for their faults. However, *Christ* gave another mark of his infinite power in escaping the fury of these wretches, who would have taken away his life. The several miracles that are related about the end of this chapter, and by which our Lord began to make himself known
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in *Galilee*, and the care he took to pass through all its towns preaching the Gospel, are so many proofs of his great zeal, of his unlimited power, of his love towards mankind, and of the divinity of his doctrine.

CHAP. V.

I. ST. *Luke* speaks of the miraculous draught of fishes which St. *Peter* caught at our Lord's command. II. Of the healing of the leper. III. And of the paralytic. IV. Of the calling of *Levi*, or the apostle St. *Matthew*. And lastly, of *Jesus's* reply to those who found fault at his eating with publicans and sinners, and at his disciples not fasting as those of *John* did.

REFLECTIONS.

WE ought to admire the power of *Christ*, as well as his wisdom, in the wonderful draught of fishes, which we have read the history of. He wrought this miracle to confirm St. *Peter* and some of his companions in their vocation to the office of apostles; and to assure them that they should be very successful in their ministry. This miracle must have made the greater impression on them, as our Lord did it in a matter that related to their own business; as they were fishers they were the more sensible of the greatness of it; and it did accordingly produce such an effect in the mind of St. *Peter*, who being seized with admiration, respect, and fear, at the sight of what had happened, immediately, with his companions St. *James* and St. *John*, forsook all to follow our Lord. In the cure of the leper, there are these two things to be observed, viz. That it was for his faith and prayers that he was made whole, and that our Lord sent him to the priest, and commanded him to offer what was ordered by the law of *Moses* in the like case. He did this the better to convince the priests of the certainty of the miracle he had wrought, and to shew that he observed all that God had commanded in the law. There is in the
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case of the paralytical person this peculiarity, that to him our Lord granted not only the cure of his bodily disease, but pardon of sins, which he declared he had power to do: a proof to us that he had a supreme authority over all men: and as it was the faith of those that presented him to the Lord which moved him to work a cure upon him; this teaches us, that faith is of very great efficacy, and that he that would feel the effects of God's grace and favour must pray with confidence. Of all favours, the most necessary, and that which we are most sure to obtain, is pardon of sins. It is to be observed in the calling of St. *Matthew*, who was a publican, or a collector of taxes, that our Lord chose his disciples and apostles among persons that were even looked upon with contempt by the *Jews*, as were the publicans. In imitation of St. *Matthew*, who left his employment as soon as *Jesus* called him, we must learn to obey the heavenly call as soon as we receive it, and renounce without delay every thing that may hinder us. Our Saviour's reply to the Pharisees, who were offended at his keeping company with sinners, teaches us, that the end of his coming was to save sinners; but however, that sinners cannot be saved without repentance; this likewise shews us, that those who have the spirit of *Christ*, are glad when God turns sinners from the error of their ways, and earnestly endeavour to bring them into the right way. Lastly, It must be remembered, that if our Lord did not oblige his disciples to fast, as the disciples of *John* the Baptist did, we must not imagine that our Lord's sense of the duty of fasting differed from that of *John*, or that the fasts which *John*'s disciples observed were too difficult for *Christ*'s disciples to perform. The only difference between them in this respect, was, that *Christ* conversed freely with all sorts of people, and upon all occasions, whereas *John* the Baptist lived a retired life. He declares, however, that his disciples would be called, after his departure from them, not only to fasting, but to great sufferings, and, that if he did not call them at that time to sufferings, it was to spare their weakness. From hence we may gather, that

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Christ was so far from condemning fasting and a mortified life, or from suffering his disciples to hunt after pleasures, and gratify their senses, that, on the contrary, he calls them to live in sobriety and mortification, and to bear their cross.

CHAP. VI. 1—19.

I. **O**UR Lord vindicates his disciples plucking and eating the ears of corn on the Sabbath-day. II. He cures a man that had a withered hand. And, III. He appoints the twelve apostles.

REFLECTIONS.

I. **T**HE reflection we are to make upon our Lord's answer to the Pharisees, who were offended because his disciples had plucked the ears of corn, and because he himself had healed a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath-day, is, that the hypocritical and envious are very apt to condemn others, and are offended at that which is innocent and lawful, and sometimes even with actions that are necessary and commendable; and scruple things of small moment, while they themselves are wanting in the most essential duties of piety and charity. We ought, therefore, to learn from hence to avoid hypocrisy, superstition, and rash judgment; and always to cleave to the most weighty matters in religion, and to a solid piety, enlightened and attended with charity. We further learn, that no one should omit actions truly good and necessary, under a pretence that some people may judge ill of them; and that the fear of offending persons of bad dispositions should never keep us from our duty. What is to be observed on the calling of the apostles, is, that those holy men whom the Lord made choice of to be the dispensers of his grace, and to convert the world, were mean and inconsiderable in the eye of the world; so that we see in this choice a proof of the divinity of the Gospel, and of the almighty power of *Christ*, who endued them with gifts sufficient for such an employment.

ment. The memory of these first ministers of the Gospel should be precious among Christians, who ought to praise God for the great things he has done by their means; to receive the doctrine they taught, and which is contained in their writings; and lastly, to practise the holy commands which they have left us, as the apostles of our Lord and Saviour, to whom be ascribed all glory, praise, and obedience, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

CHAP. VI. 20—49.

WE have here a discourse of our Lord concerning the true happiness and misery of man; of charity; of preserving peace; of the love of our enemies; of rash judgment; and of some other duties. He concludes by a parable, shewing, that it is of no use to hear his word, if we do not do the things which he commandeth.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS discourse contains several useful instructions. The first is, that the poor, afflicted, despised, and persecuted, who are at the same time, meek, patient, and godly, are the true disciples of *Jesus Christ*, and will be happy in this world and the next; and that on the contrary, those who are thought the most happy, because they live in plenty and in pleasures, and because they are loved and esteemed by the world, are the most miserable. The second instruction is, that we ought to love every body, even those that do not love us; to return them good for evil; to suffer some loss or injury rather than revenge ourselves, or engage in quarrels and law-suits; that if we only love those who love us we are no better than heathens; but that we ought to be merciful and to do good to all; imitating therein our heavenly Father, who is kind both to the wicked and ungrateful. Our Lord has forbidden us to pass rash judgments; and declared that it is a very great piece of hypocrisy, to examine and censure other men's faults

faults without amending our own, which are oftentimes greater than those of our neighbours. The fourth instruction is comprised in these expressions; namely, that *the tree is known by its fruit*: and that *from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*. That is to say, that men shew by their behaviour and discourse what they are; and that the way to order our actions and words aright, is to purify our hearts. Lastly, *Christ* tells us, in the most positive manner, that he does not acknowledge for his disciples those that call him Lord, but do not obey his commands; and shews, by the comparison of one house built on a rock, and another upon the sand, that nothing can shake those, who, to the knowledge of the Gospel, join the practice of its duties; whereas those that content themselves with hearing his word, without doing that which it commands, cannot resist temptations, nor attain salvation. Let us incessantly set before our eyes these divine rules of mortality prescribed by *Jesus Christ*; let us make them subservient to our advancing in piety; and let us beseech him that he himself will enable us to do it by his grace.

CHAP. VII. 1—23.

JESUS cures the servant of a Gentile captain: raises from the dead the son of a widow woman of the city of *Nain*; and answers the disciples of *John* the Baptist, who came to ask him whether he was the Messiah.

REFLECTIONS.

IN the cure of the centurion's servant, we may remark the humility of that officer, who, being a Gentile by birth, thought himself not worthy that *Christ* should come into his house; as also the greatness of his faith, which appears in his belief that our Lord, without coming to see his servant, could heal him by one word only. Our Lord's extraordinary commendations of the faith of this centurion, saying
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“ that he had not found such faith among the Jews,” and the miracle he wrought in his favour, shews very plainly, that nothing is more acceptable to him than faith and humility; and that a lively faith, and a profound sense of our own unworthiness, are the sure means to obtain from him the effects of his mercy. The other miracle that our Lord wrought in raising the son of the widow of *Nain*, is an event in which the power of *Jesus Christ* appears in a manner yet more illustrious, as well as his goodness and compassion for the afflicted. This history, therefore, affords very powerful motives for trust and reliance on him; which ought to fill us with comfort, and fully convince us, that as our Lord has raised the dead upon several occasions, he will certainly do it at the last day, according to his promises. Our Saviour’s answer to *John*’s disciples is remarkable; for, being asked whether he was the Messiah, he did not give a direct answer, but contented himself with working miracles in their presence, which proved more plainly that he was the Messiah, than if he had said it himself. We see in this part of our Saviour’s conduct, a remarkable instance of his wisdom; since by not directly calling himself the Messiah, which he always avoided doing publickly, he did, however, every thing that was most proper to convince men that he was that great Redeemer which God had promised to send, and the *Jews* expected.

CHAP. VII. 24—50.

- I. OUR Lord speaks of *John* the Baptist, representing the nature and excellence of his ministry.
 II. He complains, that most of the *Jews*, and particularly the Scribes and Pharisees, had rejected his ministry, as well as that of *John*.
 III. Being at dinner with a Pharisee, he pronounces forgiveness of sins to the woman who was a sinner.

REFLECTIONS.

THE meaning of what *Christ* said to the *Jews* concerning the ministry of *John* the Baptist, was, that as *John* the Baptist had not appeared in the pomp and splendor which usually attend the ambassadors of earthly kings, but only in quality of a great prophet; they should not be surprised, if he himself appeared in a low condition, nor reject him on that account. By which he would give them to understand, that the kingdom of the Messiah should have nothing in it carnal and worldly; and engage them to attend wholly to his spiritual and divine doctrines. II. *Christ* says on this occasion, that as great as *John* the Baptist was, the least in the kingdom of God, that is, of his true disciples, would be greater than he; because Christians know more of the Messiah, and the reasons for his coming, than *John* the Baptist himself did. These words, which informs us of the advantages of our condition, should stir us up to act in a manner suitable to them, and to render ourselves worthy of them. III. We see that those persons who were the most contemptible, and the most hated among the *Jews*, were affected at the preaching of *John* the Baptist and our Saviour; but that the Pharisees, and those that passed for the wisest among them, had rejected those exhortations, saying, that the life of *John* the Baptist was too strict, and that of *Christ* too loose, because he often kept company with sinners. This instance proves, that nothing can satisfy a corrupt heart. Behave with ever so great caution, there is no avoiding the censure of such persons; whilst those whose heart is right do zealously lay hold of the means which God affords for their edification and salvation. IV. The history of the woman that was a sinner, has something in it very remarkable, and instructs us in the nature and efficacy of true repentance. We find in the penitent sinner here mentioned, a pattern of that profound humility with which great sinners ought to bewail their sins; and of that lively sorrow which pierces the soul,

soul, and which expresses itself by confession, by tears, and by all the tokens of a sincere compunction, and of a holy confusion; and which produces an intire renunciation of sin. We see here with how much goodness the Saviour of the world receives true penitents, and pardons their faults. What he says to the Pharisee, who believed that *Jesus* was not a prophet, because he permitted that same sinner to approach him, and to kiss his feet; tended to convince him that he knew very well what this woman was, but that he did not reject great sinners when they were truly penitent, and that we also should not reject nor despise them: we must likewise take a particular notice of these words of our Lord; *He to whom much is forgiven will love him the more.* By which he shews plainly, that those to whom God pardons great sins, ought to love him with greater fervency, and that they may even attain to a considerable degree of holiness. This is a doctrine very proper for the consolation of sinners, and which ought to animate them to the love of God, and to the practice of piety and good work.

CHAP. VIII. 1—25.

THIS part of the eighth chapter of *St. Luke*, includes three things. I. The parable of the seed II. The declaration our Lord makes, that his true disciples were as dear to him as his own kindred. And, III. The stilling the tempest.

REFLECTIONS.

THE design of *Jesus Christ* in the parable of the seed, was to teach those that heard him, that all men do not receive the word of God after the same manner. The seed that falls by the wayside, represents people that are entirely hardened, and such as this word does not at all effect. By the seed that fell among stones, our Lord describes the condition of those on whom the word makes some impression; who approve of it at first, and receive it gladly; but being not well grounded,

ed, they do not persevere, but yield to temptation. The seed that falls among thorns, sets before our eyes the condition of those hearers on whom the Gospel does not produce its effect, because their heart is taken up with the love of riches and pleasures, and loaded with the cares of this life. By the seed that is sown in good ground, and that brings forth much fruit, *Christ* denotes the effect which the word produces in those who receive it in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with perseverance. Let us listen seriously and continually to this parable; let us take care, as our Lord exhorts us here, after what manner we receive the word of God, and carefully examine ourselves, to see whether we make a good use of it. This is what we are further obliged to by the declaration which our Lord made, when he was told, that his mother and his near relations desired to speak with him. We may learn from what he then said, that what chiefly procures us a share in his love, is a great attention and a great zeal to hear his word, and to do his will. What thus unites us to *Christ*, should also strictly unite us to each other. The bands of holiness are yet stronger than those of nature; and of all men, those ought to have the greatest share of our affection and esteem, who truly love our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and keep his commandments. Lastly, We find here, that our Lord, who had done so many miracles for the relief of the afflicted, was pleased to work a miracle in favour of his apostles, delivering them from great danger, when they were ready to perish in the water. The apostles were in great fear upon this occasion, and our Lord taking notice of the weakness of their faith, rebukes them for it, but, however, delivers them from their danger. Our weaknesses do not hinder God from granting us the assistance we stand in need of, if we apply to him with sincerity and humility. Those whom God loves, may meet with great dangers, and in such a condition, they may be overcome with fears, but God will never forsake them; and whatever condition

dition they are in, he favours them with his love and protection.

CHAP. VIII. 26—56.

CHRIST works three miracles: I. He cures the demoniac. And, II. The woman that had the issue of blood. III. Raises to life the daughter of *Jairus*.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT is here related of the deplorable condition which the man possessed with a devil had for a long time been in, and the several circumstances of his history, prove the certainty of the miracle which our Lord wrought on this occasion, as well as his great mercy and goodness towards him. *Christ's* giving the devils leave to enter into the herd of swine, is another proof of the greatness and reality of the miracle, and of the absolute power he had over the devils; and a proof, likewise, that those wicked spirits feared and dreaded him as their judge. *Jesus* having delivered this man, ordered him to declare abroad how great things God had done for him. Thus ought we to acknowledge and publish the goodness of the Lord towards us, when he has granted us any signal favour or deliverance. We should consider farther, that though men are not now exposed to the power of the devils, as the possessed of devils were in our Saviour's time, they may fall, however, after another manner, into the power of this enemy of our salvation. This is the dreadful condition of those, of whom the Scripture says, that the devil works powerfully on them, and that they are taken captive by him at his will. In the cure of the woman who had an issue of blood, we are principally to attend to her sentiments and behaviour; not daring to present herself to our Lord, to beg him to heal her, she was contented to touch his garment; this shews her profound humility, and at the same time the greatness of her faith, and the high
opinion

opinion she had of the power of *Christ*. Her speedy and miraculous cure does not only display the divine virtue that was in our Saviour, but does likewise convince us, that with humility and faith we shall obtain of him every thing necessary to salvation. The more we think ourselves unworthy of God's grace, the more ready is he to bestow it on us. Another thing worthy to be taken notice of, is, that our Lord knew this woman had touched him, though she had not made her address to him; which shews that nothing is hid from him, and that this and all his miracles were done because it was his will they should be done. The resurrection of the daughter of *Jairus*, is a still more considerable effect of our Lord's infinite power; this miracle, with some others of the like nature, do not suffer us to doubt whether *Christ* could raise the dead, nor that he shall one day do the same for our sakes also, as he has promised us.

CHAP. IX. 1—27.

ST. *Luke* relates, I. The sending of the twelve apostles throughout *Judea*, and the instructions which our Lord gave them. II. The opinion that king *Herod* had of *Christ*. III. The miraculous multiplying of the five loaves and two fishes. IV. Our Lord's discourse with the apostles when he asked them their opinion concerning him, and forwarned them of his death, and exhorted them to prepare themselves for sufferings.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WHAT we are to consider in the sending the apostles is, that *Christ* ordered them to go before him into *Judea*, in order to spread abroad the glad tidings of the Messiah's coming, and to prepare the *Jews*, by their preaching and by their miracles, for his reception. He was likewise willing, by this method, to prepare them for their future preaching of the Gospel throughout

out the whole earth. But that which we are chiefly to observe in *Christ's* speech to them is, that the ministry of the servants of God is only profitable to those that receive them; and that those who reject them, draw upon themselves a severe, but just condemnation.

II. It appears from hence, Secondly, That they had a high opinion of our Lord among the *Jews*, since they took him for *Elias*, or some other of the prophets; but it is a thing worth notice, that *Herod*, who was a wicked prince, and of the sect of the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, should imagine that *John* the Baptist, whom he had put to death, was risen again. We must consider this as an effect of his remorse of conscience, for having put to death that holy man. Though the ungodly reject the truths of religion, they are never firmly persuaded of the truth of their own sentiments, and when their conscience is roused, acknowledge those very truths which they doubted of, and even denied before. III. The miracle of the five loaves and two fishes, which fed several thousand men, is one of the most remarkable miracles our Saviour wrought; since they were all so many witnesses of the surprising fact, and instruments in making it known to the world, which tended very much to confirm the truth of *Christ's* doctrine and his divine mission, and induce many to believe in him. What we are to gather from our Lord's discourse with his disciples, concerning the opinion men had of him, and what they themselves thought, is, that faith in *Christ* consists in looking upon him as the Messiah and the Son of the living God. That he came into the world to suffer and to die. That no one can be his true disciple, without taking up his cross, and being always ready to make a public and a sincere profession of his faith. And lastly, That there is nothing of greater importance to us than the salvation of our souls; and that it would be of no advantage to us to gain the whole world at the expence of our souls.

CHAP. IX. 28—62.

I. OUR Lord is transfigured in presence of three of his apostles; cures a lunatic whom his apostles could not cure; and tells them again that he should be condemned to death. II. He teaches them humility, and blames them for hindering a man from casting out devils in his name, because he followed not them. III. He censures the inconsiderate zeal of two of his apostles, and returns an answer to three persons who desired to follow him.

REFLECTIONS.

THE transfiguration of our Lord, and the glory with which the apostles saw him then surrounded, is a convincing proof of the truth and divinity of the Gospel, as St. *Peter* himself, who was present at that transfiguration, takes notice in the first chapter of his Second Epistle. The presence of *Moses* and *Elias*, who were seen with *Jesus* at that time, and who discoursed with him about what he was to suffer at *Jerusalem*, shews, that this was he whose coming had been foretold by the prophets. God caused a voice to be heard from heaven, after *Moses* and *Elias* were departed, to teach the apostles, and by them all mankind, that from thenceforth they were to hear *Jesus* only; and that he was infinitely greater than *Moses* and *Elias*, and all the prophets. Lastly, It is from hence evident, that those holy men, who had departed this life many ages before, were alive with God; and therefore we may conclude, that those who have served God faithfully in this life, are not annihilated by death. We see in the cure of the lunatic, that the faith of the apostles was still very weak, as our Lord reproaches them; but that their faith grew stronger afterwards, in proportion as they were better instructed, and as their prejudices wore off. As the weakness of the apostles faith was the reason they could not cure the lunatic, so our slips and failings proceed only from the

want of faith ; for which reason, we ought to labour to be confirmed therein, and to beseech the Lord, that it may be more and more increased in us. From the lessons of humility which our Lord gave his disciples, let us learn, that haughty thoughts, and the love of worldly glory, are unworthy of Christians ; that, on the contrary, they ought to place their glory in humility, and esteem all those that believe in *Christ*, and that love him, even though they be mean and contemptible in the world. The answer that our Lord gave St. *John*, who would have hindered a man from casting out devils in *Christ*'s name, because that person did not keep company with the apostles, teaches us, that we must never oppose, upon any pretence, those who labour sincerely to advance the kingdom of our Lord. We ought to pay a due regard to piety wherever we find it, since every thing that is good must come from God. There are weighty reflections to be made upon the reproof which *Christ* gave *James* and *John*, who, being transported with an indiscreet zeal, and with that aversion which the *Jews* bore to the *Samaritans*, were for bringing down fire from heaven upon those *Samaritans* that had refused to lodge their master. This is a warning to us, never to suffer ourselves to be overcome by a false and blind zeal, such is always that zeal which inclines us to do evil to men ; but to be always endued, as *Christ* himself was, with the spirit of meekness and forbearance towards all, and particularly towards such as are in error, and that entertain sentiments of religion different from our own. By the answers which *Christ* gave the three persons that would have followed him, he would have them to understand, First, that he did not promise the conveniencies of this life to his disciples. Secondly, That they must be prepared to forsake all things for the love of him, even such as are innocent and lawful, when they are a hindrance to the discharge of our duty. And thirdly, When men are once engaged in his service, they are bound to follow that call, and not to look back to the world.

CHAP. X. 1—24.

I. *CHRIST* chooses seventy disciples, sends them before him, gives them power to work miracles, and necessary instructions for their office, and denounces the judgments of God against those cities which had not repented upon his preaching and doing miracles in them. II. The seventy disciples give an account to *Christ* of the success of their journey and ministry; upon which occasion he foretels the destruction of the kingdom of Satan. III. He praises God that the Gospel was preached and received by persons of mean rank, and inconsiderable in the eye of the world; and he represents to his disciples how happy they were in being instructed by him in the great truths of the Gospel.

REFLECTIONS.

I. We may observe, that *Christ*, who had already chose twelve apostles, was pleased also to make choice of seventy disciples, and send them into *Judea*, that the happy tidings of the coming of the kingdom of God might be spread with the greater dispatch, and that they might be the better able to go and preach the same doctrine throughout all the earth afterwards. The instructions which he gave them, shew, that the servants of God ought to exercise their office with fidelity, disinterestedness, and courage; that those whose heart is right, and who are of a peaceable disposition, will receive them; but that those who refuse to hear them, are inexcusable. II. The threatenings which *Christ* denounces against the cities of *Galilee*, where he had preached and done miracles, are a warning to us, that those who receive the greatest favours from heaven, often abuse them in a shameful manner; and that those who have the Gospel preached to them, and do not grow better by it, must expect the severest punishment. III. Upon what *Christ* said to the seventy disciples, when they gave him an account of the suc-

cess of their journey, and of the miracles which they had wrought, we may observe, that he foretold the speedy ruin of the kingdom of Satan, which actually happened soon after by the preaching of the Gospel. He likewise declared to them, that though it was a very glorious privilege to be able to cast out devils, they ought rather to rejoice that their names were written in heaven; that is to say, that they were the disciples of *Jesus Christ*, and that the joys and glories of heaven were reserved for them. The advantage of belonging to God, and of being in the number of true believers, is infinitely more considerable than the power of working miracles. IV. Let us also carefully attend to the thanks which *Christ* returned to God, that the Gospel was received by the mean and humble, whilst the great men of the world, and those who are looked upon as the wisest, did reject it. It is not to worldly persons, and those that have an high opinion of themselves, that God reveals himself; but it is to the meek and lowly, and to such as are of a sincere and honest heart. V. Let us also observe what our Lord assured his disciples of in such strong terms, that they were happy in being instructed by him, and in knowing those truths of the Gospel, which were not known by the ancient prophets as they were by them. This advantage we enjoy in common with them; but let us remember, at the same time, that if we do not make a good use of our happiness, such knowledge will only serve to render us more miserable, and that it would be much better for us to have never enjoyed it.

CHAP. X. 25—42.

- I. *CHRIST* answers one of the Scribes, who asked him, what we must do to obtain everlasting life.
- II. To teach that doctor of the law, that all men are our neighbours, he proposes to him the parable of a man that fell among thieves.
- III. *Christ* going to lodge in the house of *Martha* and *Mary*, takes occasion

sion to commend the piety of *Mary*, who kept close to him, that she might hear him.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS portion of Scripture furnishes us with three instructions: I. That the chief command of God, and the sum of all religion, is to love God above all things, and our neighbours as ourselves. This is the way to fulfil the whole law, and to discharge every duty; and this is what we are bound to do, if we desire to attain to true substantial holiness, and by that means to eternal life. II. That there is no man who is not our neighbour, and whom we ought not to love. This is what *Christ* teaches us by the parable of the *Jew*, who being wounded by thieves, was neither assisted by the priest, nor by the *Levite*, though they were his own countrymen; but was relieved by a *Samaritan*, who was a stranger, and of a people hated by the *Jews*. The design of *Christ* was thereby to shew, that all men, without exception, even strangers, and those that do not love us, are our neighbours; that we are obliged to love them all, to do good to them, and to succour the unfortunate with all our might. This was a clear and evident truth, which, however, the most learned of the *Jewish* doctors did not rightly comprehend. III. The third instruction is taken from that which is said in this chapter of *Martha* and *Mary*. The judgment our Lord passed upon the behaviour of those two sisters, teaches us, that our chief care ought to be to adhere to him, and to hearken to his word; and that the employments of this life, even such as are lawful, ought never to make us neglect the thing that is most important of all, the one only thing necessary. And if we would be happy, we must, like *Mary*, choose that good part which shall never be taken from us.

CHAP. XI. 1—28.

I. *CHRIST* instructs his disciples about prayer.

II. He cures a demoniack, and returns an answer

answer to the Pharisees, who said that it was by the power of Satan he cast out devils. III. He proposes the parable of a man into whom the evil spirit enters again, after it had gone out of him. IV. He speaks of the happiness of those who hear his word and keep it.

REFLECTIONS.

THE first instruction which the Saviour of the world here gives us, relates to prayer, and particularly to the Lord's Prayer. This Divine Prayer having *Jesus Christ* for its Author, and including all that is most important for us to ask: First, With respect to the glory of God, and in the next place to our own wants, as well for the body as the soul, we ought to present it to God with all possible reverence and attention; and at the same time, with an extraordinary degree of confidence; since, when we ask what our Lord has commanded us to ask, we cannot doubt but our prayers, as to the matter of them, are agreeable to the will of God: Our Lord teaches us, moreover, that if when we desire any thing of men with great earnestness, we prevail upon them to grant our petitions, much more shall we, by our prayers, obtain from God, who is our Father, true, that is, spiritual blessings; all this ought to stir us up to pray with earnestness and zeal, and not to faint in this holy exercise. II. The blasphemy of the Pharisees, who attributed to the devil the miracles which *Christ* wrought by virtue of the Spirit of God, teaches us, that men who have a wicked heart, defeat the most powerful means made use of by God to overcome the hardness of their hearts, and that they are even more and more confirmed in their wickedness. III. The similitude of the evil spirit, that enters again into the man after he had been cast out, shews what would happen to the *Jews*, who had not laid hold of the advantage of *Christ's* presence, and of his miracles; namely, that they would fall into greater obduracy, and would feel the divine vengeance; that is likewise what happens

pens to all such, who, after having received the grace of God, do resist its motions, and engage again in sin. Let us learn, lastly, from the answer which our Saviour made to the woman that admired his discourses, that the most glorious and the most advantageous thing to ourselves, is to hear the word of God, and to observe what it commands, as it is expressed in these words, *Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.*

CHAP. XI. 29—54.

I. **O**UR Lord reproves the unbelief of the *Jews*, by setting before them the example of the *Ninevites*, and of the queen of *Sheba*. II. He tells them, that such their unbelief could not hinder his doctrine, which was a light to lighten mankind, from being preached; and he shews, that in order to receive any benefit from it, our eye must be pure and single; which is as much as to say, our minds must be free and disengaged from prejudice and passion. III. Being invited to dine with a Pharisee, he declaims against the Scribes and Pharisees, reproaching them for their hypocrisy, pride, and infidelity, and threatening them with the judgments of God.

REFLECTIONS.

' WE are taught by the example of the queen of *Sheba*, and that of the *Ninevites*, those to whom God has granted a greater degree of light, and more considerable opportunities of salvation, have reason to expect a more severe condemnation if they neglect those advantages, and persist in their infidelity. II. What our Saviour said of the candle set in a candlestick, and of the eye, which is the light of the body, signifies these two things: one is, that he had made known his doctrine to his disciples, to the end they might make it known to the world; and the other, that our minds must be rightly disposed, and our hearts pure and sincere, in order to receive and to understand

stand the excellency of this doctrine. III. We have seen our Lord reproaching the Pharisees for observing an external purity, for affecting great appearance of virtue, piety, zeal, and humility, and for shewing a great respect to the memory of the prophets, whilst their hearts were filled with pride and covetousness, whilst they persecuted those whom God had sent to them, and hindered men from believing in him; for which reason, he threatens them with total destruction. Hereby we may see in how great guilt men involve themselves, when they suffer pride and covetousness to possess their hearts, when they reject the word of God, and turn others away from faith and holiness, which is the highest pitch of wickedness. Above all, this discourse of our Lord teaches us, that God abhors hypocrisy; that those who go no farther than to an outward purity, and neglect that of the heart and conscience, are an abomination to him. Let us therefore study true holiness. Let us remember that God chiefly has respect to the inward parts; and that the only way to please him, is to have an upright heart, and to be filled with charity; to be truly humble, to receive his word with submission, and to contribute all that in us lies to bring other men to faith and salvation.

CHAP. XII. 1—34.

THIS chapter contains an excellent discourse of our Lord, in which, I. He exhorts his disciples not to dissemble the truths which they had learned of him, but to declare them publickly; and that the fear of men might not hinder them from so doing, he warns them to fear none but God, and to make an open profession of the truth; and promises to defend and assist them when they should appear before the great men of the world. II. Upon occasion of a man who had a dispute with another about an inheritance, he declaims against covetousness, shewing by the parable of a rich man, the folly of such as care for nothing but heaping

heaping up wealth; and telling them, that they should not be anxious for the necessaries of life, but depend upon Providence, and be chiefly solicitous for what relates to the kingdom of God. III. He assures his disciples, that though they were weak, and but few in number, they should not fear the want of any thing that was necessary for them; and he exhorts them to make a right use of worldly goods.

REFLECTIONS.

CHRIST instructs us here about the profession of truth, and the love of worldly goods. I. Upon the first head, we see that Christians, and especially the ministers of *Jesus Christ*, ought to make a public profession of the truth, without standing in fear of men; since men can only kill the body, whereas God can cast both soul and body into hell. Whereby our Lord, in the clearest manner, settles the distinction between soul and body, the immortality of the soul, and the punishments of the wicked in the life to come. Our Lord declares moreover, that God watches over those who fear him, and who suffer for his sake; that he assists them by his spirit; that at the last day he will own them for his, that shall have had the courage to call themselves his disciples; but that he will not own those who, through fear of death, shall not have dared to make an open confession of their faith. These are very powerful considerations, to animate us to a free and sincere profession of Christianity. II. Let us seriously reflect upon what our Lord says concerning the love of worldly goods, and upon the parable of the man that had heaped up great wealth, but died at the time he thought to enjoy it. *Christ* was willing to shew thereby, that it is a great folly to care only for gathering of riches, which we must leave when we come to die, and to neglect the acquiring heavenly goods, which are solid and eternal. He has likewise exhorted us not to disquiet ourselves for the wants of the body, but to trust to Providence, which provides

provides for the necessities of all creatures; to seek, before all things, the kingdom of God; and instead of engaging all our care for the things of the world, and setting our hearts upon them, to employ our wealth in alms, in order to secure to ourselves the possession of an everlasting treasure.

CHAP. XII. 35—59.

I. *CHRIST* exhorts his disciples to watch, and to be continually prepared for his coming. II. He represents to them, that the duties of which he had discoursed, related to them in a particular manner; they being as it were stewards, appointed in the house of their master, for the instruction of others; and that having received a greater knowledge of the will of God, they would be treated with greater severity if they did not perform it. III. He warns them, that great troubles would arise in the world upon the account of his doctrine. IV. He laments the blindness of the *Jews*, who did not acknowledge that the time of the Messiah was come; and he exhorts them to lay hold of that opportunity, and to reconcile themselves with God whilst it was in their power.

REFLECTIONS.

LET us learn from hence, I. That since we are ignorant when *Christ* will come, and may be called every moment to give up our accounts to him, we ought always to watch, and to apply ourselves incessantly to our duty, to the end, that when he comes he may find us employed in well doing. II. That those to whom God has given the knowledge of himself, and chiefly the ministers of the church, are bound to use it for the good of others, and to the glory of their master, if they would not be punished as unfaithful servants; that, in general, he who knows the will of God, and does it not, shall be treated with greater severity and, that God will require a greater account of those, to whom he shall have granted more light and

and more grace. III. What our Lord says, that he was come to kindle fire and division in the world, does not signify that he came with such a design, nor that the Gospel tends to set men at variance; since, on the contrary, the coming of *Jesus Christ*, and the Gospel, have no other end, but to cause peace to reign: but his meaning was, that mankind, by their malice, would take occasion from his doctrine to hate and persecute one another. Our Lord warns his disciples of this, that they might not be staggered when the thing should come to pass; wherefore neither ought we to be any more surprized, when we see that troubles arise in the world upon the account or pretence of religion. IV. *Jesus* told the *Jews*, that they might easily discern the time of the manifestation of the Messiah was come; but we have much more reason to be convinced of this truth, because every thing that has happened since that time, has tended to confirm it. We should therefore be entirely inexcusable if we did not make a better use than the *Jews* did of the happiness we enjoy in living at a time when the mercy of God is so clearly revealed; and hasten to make our peace with him, and to prevent his judgments, before we are called to appear in his presence.

CHAP. XIII.

I. OUR Lord exhorts the *Jews* to take warning from that which happened to certain *Galileans*, whom *Pilate* had put to death whilst they were offering their sacrifices, and from those eighteen persons who had been killed by the fall of a tower. II. To this end he proposes the parable of the barren fig-tree. III. He cures a woman that had been ill eighteen years, and so bent that she could not stand upright. IV. He proposes the similitude of a grain of mustard-seed, and of leaven. V. Answers the question that was asked him, whether there were but few that would be saved; exhorts us to enter betimes into the way of salvation; and foretels, that the unbelieving *Jews*, who had

had not improved by his presence, should be shut out of the kingdom of God, whilst other nations should be admitted into it. VI. Being informed that *Herod* sought his life, he declares, he did not fear that cunning and artful prince; tells them, his ministry was drawing towards a conclusion, and that he should really be put to death in a short time; but that he should suffer death in *Jerusalem*, and not in *Galilee*, where *Herod* reigned; upon which account he deplores the ingratitude, obduracy, and destruction of that city.

REFLECTIONS.

CHRIST teaches us in this chapter, that we must not imagine, that those who have some great misfortunes befall them, are always the most criminal; nor that those are better than others whom God is pleased to spare; but that he often bears with the guilty for wise and good reasons, whilst he afflicts others who are not so great sinners as they; wherefore, instead of condemning those whom God visits, and flattering ourselves, we ought to repent and grow better by the misfortunes that happen to them, lest we should be handled more severely than they. The meaning of the parable of the barren fig-tree was, that God, who had already shewn great patience towards the *Jews*, did then make use of the last means for their conversion, by causing them to be called to repentance by *Christ* himself; after which they were to be destroyed, as it actually happened in a few years. This parable sets before us God's patience towards sinners, making use of the most efficacious methods to bring them to repentance; but that by their obstinacy and impenitence, they draw upon themselves the utmost miseries. *Christ* having healed a woman that went double for eighteen years together, there were some who were offended at his doing this miracle on the sabbath-day. What *Christ* says to convince them of their ignorance, as well as of their wickedness, teaches us, that the practice of charity and good works is the most necessary

fary thing in religion ; that these duties are always in season ; and that we should let slip no occasion of discharging them, though there should be people of so evil a disposition as to be offended at them. The parables of the mustard seed, and of the leaven, signify, that though the Gospel was received by very few, whilst our Saviour was in the world, and the beginnings of his kingdom were very weak, it should be established in all places, and in a very short time ; as it fell out accordingly : which proves the divinity of the Gospel. We ought carefully to meditate upon the answer which our Lord returned to those that asked him, whether there would be but few people saved ; *Strive*, says he, *to enter in at the strait gate : for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.* These words teach us, that instead of putting vain and curious questions about any thing which God has reserved the knowledge of to himself, and particularly about the salvation of others, our principal care ought to be to attain it ourselves ; that we ought to take continual pains for it, and to begin early ; that when the opportunity is lost, we shall not be admitted any more ; and that then, all that will remain to the wicked for their part, will be nothing but remorse and despair, to see themselves excluded from the blessings of heaven through their own fault. We have seen that our Lord feared neither the craft nor cruelty of *Herod*, because he knew that he was not to die in *Galilee*, but at *Jerusalem*. This shews us, that wicked men cannot always execute their own designs, much less hinder what God has purposed, and that we need fear nothing when we walk in our calling. Lastly, the tenderness wherewith our Lord laments the ingratitude and destruction of *Jerusalem*, by saying, that he would have screened the *Jews* from the judgments of God, but they would not ; shews very plainly, that God has no other views nor designs, with regard to men, but those of love ; and that no evil befalls them but what they bring upon themselves, by despising his goodness, and by slighting and rejecting the offers of his grace.

CHAP. XIV.

I. **O**UR Lord dining with a Pharisee, cures a drop-sical person; and proves, that men ought not to be offended because that miracle was done on a sabbath-day. II. He gives lessons of humility and charity to those who sat at table with him. III. He proposes to them the parable of the feast, to which those that were invited would not go. IV. He declares, that those who would be his disciples, should be ready to forsake all that was most dear to them, and even their lives; and shews, by two similitudes, the necessity of that duty.

REFLECTIONS.

THE cure which *Christ* granted to the man that had the dropsy, shews, that he was always ready to do good and to relieve the afflicted; and that there was no sort of distemper which he did not cure; and what he said to those who did not approve of his working miracles upon the sabbath-day, shews, that we must avoid hypocrisy and rash censures, and lay hold upon all occasions that offer, to do works of kindness and charity. The second lesson relates to humility and charity; *Christ* recommends both those duties, when he tells us, that they who endeavour to exalt themselves shall be abased before God, and even before men; whilst those that humble themselves shall be exalted: and when he exhorts us not to imitate those worldly people, who only welcome the rich and their friends, but despise and neglect the poor and unfortunate. The parable of the feast signifies, that the *Jews*, and especially the chief among them, were to be rejected for not embracing the invitation which God made them by *Jesus Christ* and his Apostles; and that those who were the most despised, and even the Gentiles themselves, should receive those favours which the *Jews* had rejected. This also relates to Christians, who do not answer their call, and who, upon frivolous
excuses,

excuses, and from the attachment they have to the things of the earth, neglect the offers of divine mercy, and by this means lose the right they have to salvation. Lastly, *Christ* warns us most expressly, that, in order to be his disciples, we must first learn to renounce every thing that may hinder us from following him. It is with this view, that he proposes the parable of a man that was going to build a tower, and that of one king who was going to fight with another. By which he teaches us, that we must not lightly or inconsiderately engage in his service; and that before we assume the name of Christians, and take that profession and vow upon us, we should examine ourselves, and see whether we are firmly resolved to be faithful to him; and whether we shall have the courage to resist temptation, to bear our cross, and use our utmost endeavours to bring others to faith and piety by our prudence and good examples.

CHAP. XV.

THE Pharisees being offended at our Saviour's eating with sinners, he proposes three parables to them. I. That of the lost sheep. II. That of the piece of money that was lost. And, III. That of the prodigal son. His design was to shew, by these three parables, that God calls sinners to repentance, and that therefore the Pharisees were to blame to find fault with his keeping company with those people.

REFLECTIONS.

THE three similitudes contained in this chapter, tend all to the same purpose; which is, to set before our eyes the great mercies of God to sinners, and his endeavour to bring them to repentance; and to shew, that as their conversion is very acceptable to him, and the holy angels are rejoiced at it, all such as love God ought likewise to be glad, and even to contribute every thing in their power towards it; and not to be sorry or jealous, as were the Pharisees, who could not bear

bear to see *Jesus* in the company of men of an evil life. This is what is chiefly denoted by the parable of the prodigal son, by whom our Lord represents those that were great sinners, or counted such; the return of that son to his father's house, represents the conversion of such sinners. The tenderness with which his father received him, shews, that God takes pleasure in the repentance and amendment of sinners, and that he is full of goodness towards them. The jealousy and concern which the eldest son shewed, because his brother had been received so kindly and joyfully, represents the temper of those Pharisees who thought themselves better than other men, and who were offended at our Lord's eating and keeping company with publicans and sinners. This is the meaning of that instructive parable, which furnishes us with several very useful reflections. We there observe how sinners err from the right way, and their criminal abuse of the grace of God; we see, likewise, the goodness of God in chastising them, in order to bring them back to their duty; the return of those that come to God by repentance; the pardon which he grants them, and the joy that their conversion ought to excite in all pious and charitable minds. To this parable all of us ought most seriously to attend; reading it carefully over and over, and meditating upon all its parts; but sinners, especially, are bound to apply this parable to themselves, that they may be encouraged thereby to return to God by a speedy and sincere repentance.

CHAP. XVI.

I. *CHRIST* shews, by the parable of the unfaithful steward, the use we ought to make of the good things of the world. II. Next, he represents, that the love of riches is very dangerous; and reproves the Pharisees for their covetousness, and for opposing the establishment of the kingdom of God from the time of *John* the Baptist. III. And lastly, to illustrate and confirm what he had said about the use of riches, he adds the parable of the wicked rich man.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.

THIS whole sixteenth chapter of *St. Luke*, tends to teach us how we must use the good things of this world. What is here said of this unfaithful steward, who, to make himself friends, discharged his master's debtors of part of what they owed him, must not be understood as if *Christ* commended the proceedings of that man, since such an action would be a manifest injustice and breach of trust. He only designed to teach us thereby, that as this steward raised himself friends by the goods of his master, before he left his service, so we ought to secure for ourselves an entrance into a better life, by employing our wealth to pious and charitable purposes. It is to stir us up to this duty, that *Christ* says, that those who cannot make a right use of the corruptible things of this life, do thereby shew that they are unworthy to possess heavenly things. It is with the same view he declares, that we cannot serve God, and set our hearts upon riches at the same time; this he proves by the example of the Pharisees, who were covetous; and who, although they had a very high esteem of themselves, were abominable in the sight of God, and the professed enemies of his kingdom. But this is what he particularly aims at in the parable of the wicked rich man and *Lazarus*; whereby our Lord represents what happens to those, who, instead of assisting the miserable, employ their wealth in gratifying their own luxury and sensuality. Our Lord plainly intimates, that pomp, effeminacy, a love of pleasures, and a want of charity, lead men to hell and destruction, even without the commission of great and enormous crimes. Besides which, we see in this parable, that as the condition of men is very different in this life, so it will likewise be after death; and that we cannot judge of the happiness or misery of men, by what happens to them in this world; we discover that the righteous enjoy sweet repose after their death, whilst the wicked are tormented; and that the condition of them both is unchangeable. The answer which

the patriarch *Abraham* returned to the wicked rich man, who prayed him to send *Lazarus* to his brethren, is a lesson to us, that God gives us, during this life, by his holy word, means sufficient to avoid destruction; that those who do not lay hold of these means, are without excuse; that they must not expect that God should work miracles for their conversion; and that although he should, yet such miracles will not convince them. All these instructions are of the utmost importance, and we can do nothing more useful than seriously to reflect upon them.

CHAP. XVII.

CHRIST speaks, I. Of offences, of forgiving injuries, of the efficacy of faith, and of the obligation we are under to do what God commands us, without pretending to merit thereby. II. He cures the ten lepers. III. He answers the Pharisees, who asked him when the kingdom of God should come; and tells them, that the kingdom of God was already among them, though they did not observe it. IV. Hence he takes occasion to warn those that heard him not to follow false christs; and to tell them, that the time would come, that they should regret the loss of those advantages which they then enjoyed, and should be overtaken by the judgments of God, as men were by the flood, and the inhabitants of *Sodom* were by the fire that destroyed them all.

REFLECTIONS.

THE instructions contained in this chapter, are the following: I. That the giving scandal or offence, is a great sin; that as men are made, it must needs be that offences come; but that those who are the occasion of them shall receive the punishment. II. That we ought not to bear any grudge against those that offend us, but that we must pardon them, and even pardon them always, though they should injure us very often. III. That faith being as necessary, in order to please God

God and obtain salvation, as it was formerly to work miracles, we should strengthen ourselves more and more therein, and, with the apostle, beseech the Lord to increase our faith. IV. That being the servants of God, we ought to do all that such a master commands us, and to do it with zeal, and, at the same time, with deep humility, remembering that we are but unworthy and unprofitable servants, that we do no more than part of our duty; that therefore we can plead no merit; and that if God vouchsafes to reward our obedience, it is in consequence of his pure favour and bounty.

V. The principal reflection to be made upon the cure of the ten lepers, is, that there was but one who came back to thank *Christ*, and to give glory to God; and that this person was a *Samaritan*, who had more piety and gratitude than the rest, who were *Jews*. Men wish to be delivered when they are in pain or sufferings, but as soon as they have obtained what they desire, most of them presently forget the favour God has granted them, and become unthankful. Those who are sincerely affected with the mercies God bestows upon them, treasure them up in their memory, and express their acknowledgment and love to him, not only by continual thanksgivings, but chiefly by their obedience, and by the good use they make of his favours. What *Christ* said to the *Jews*, that the kingdom of God was not to come with splendor; that it was already come, and even was among them, is enough to shew, that the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ* is altogether spiritual and heavenly; and that those who, like us, are so happy as to have this kingdom in the midst of them, should take care that they do not fall into the same sin as did the *Jews*, which was, not to acknowledge their happiness, nor to make a right use of it; which, nevertheless, is but too usual. For which purpose, let us consider what our Lord adds in this chapter; namely, that the *Jews* would soon repent their neglecting the advantage of his presence, and that they would be overtaken by divine vengeance, as the inhabitants of the first world

were by the deluge, and as the fire from heaven overtook the people of *Sodom*. This warning concerns us as well as the *Jews*: those among us who have slighted the precious advantages we enjoy, and the season of God's forbearance and mercy, will be thus surprised in their blindness and security, and will perish in their impenitency. Since now our Lord has forewarned us of these things, let us reflect upon them continually; and, in expectation of his coming, let us live in watchfulness, in prayer, and in the exercise of every good work, as he himself advises.

CHAP. XVIII. 1—17.

I. **O**UR Lord proposes the parable of the unjust judge. II. That of the Pharisee and the Publican. And, III. He lays his hands upon little children that were brought to him.

REFLECTIONS.

ST. *Luke* informs us, at the very entrance of this eighteenth chapter, that the end of the parable of the unjust judge, is to teach us, that we must pray always, and without fainting. This is what we learn by our Saviour's expressions; namely, that if men, and even men as wicked as that unjust judge, suffer themselves to be overcome at last by prayers and repeated solicitations, God, who is righteousness and goodness itself, will much more hearken to the prayers that are offered up to him with zeal and perseverance. But the chief aim of our Lord, was to convince us thereby, that God hears the cries and prayers of his elect, and that he will take severe vengeance on all such as unjustly oppress them. By the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, *Christ* would give us to understand, that such who had a favourable opinion of themselves, like the Pharisees, and despised others, were very odious to the Lord, by reason of their pride and hypocrisy; and that those who are looked upon as the greatest sinners, become the objects of his mercy, when they are possessed with

with profound humility, and sincerely repent, like the Publican who is here mentioned; who, standing afar off, *would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner!* Besides which, the example of this Pharisee, who boasted that he was neither an extortioner, nor unjust, nor an adulterer; that he fasted twice a week, and gave tithes of all that he possessed, but who was not justified before God, proves, that great and crying sins are not the only hindrances of men's salvation; that men may be free from great crimes, and have even an appearance of piety, and yet be rejected by God, if their heart be filled with pride, covetousness, or other secret passions. Lastly, We may make three observations upon our Lord's laying his hands upon the children that were brought to him, and his praying for them. The first is, That the age of little children does not hinder our Lord from loving and blessing them. The second, That in devoting them to God by prayer, and the ordinance of baptism, we conform ourselves to what *Christ* did on this occasion. The third, That the kingdom of God is only reserved for such as are children in innocence, meekness, and simplicity, and who receive the Gospel with such holy dispositions.

CHAP. XVIII. 18—43.

I. **O**UR Lord returns an answer to a rich young man, who asked him what he must do to be saved. From whence he takes occasion to say, that riches would obstruct the salvation of many people; and he makes glorious promises to those that will forsake worldly goods for the love of him. II. He foretells his sufferings. And, III. He restores sight to a blind man near *Jericho*.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT we are to gather from the discourse between our Lord and the rich young man mentioned in this chapter, is, I. That we cannot obtain everlasting life,
without

without keeping the commandments of God. II. That there are certain seasons wherein we are bound to forsake all we have, and expose ourselves to poverty and persecution. III. The surprise and sorrow that seized this young man, after hearing what *Christ* had said to him, verifies our Saviour's remark upon this occasion, that the good things of this life are often a great obstacle to our salvation; because those who have them, commonly set their hearts upon them. Whence it appears, IV. That if we be not called, as were the apostles, to leave all thing to follow *Christ*, we ought to avoid setting our affections upon the perishable things of this life, and employ them in assisting the miserable; and then we shall partake, both in this life and the next, of the rewards that our Saviour promises those that shall have renounced the love of riches. It is next to be observed, that in proportion as the time of our Saviour's death drew near, he spoke more plainly of it to the apostles, to the end they might be less surprised at it: But the apostles, notwithstanding what he had said to them on several occasions, could not comprehend that he was to die; which proceeded from their prejudices, and the opinion they had taken up, that, as the Messiah, he was to reign gloriously here upon earth. It must be observed, upon giving sight to the blind man here spoken of, that *Christ*, by curing this man, who stiled him the son of *David*, which was another name among the *Jews* for Messiah, proved that he was really the Messiah. Lastly, *Christ* wrought new miracles towards the end of his life, and as he drew near to *Jerusalem*, in order to give fresh proofs of his divine mission to his disciples, and to the people; and in order also to lessen the offence which his cross and his death was quickly to give them.

CHAP. XIX. 1—23.

THIS part of the chapter comprehends two heads.

I. The history of the conversion of *Zaccheus*. II. The parable of the ten pieces of money.

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REFLECTIONS.

THERE are three things chiefly to be observed in the history of *Zaccheus*. The first, That *Jesus Christ* came to call sinners to repentance; and that those persons whom the *Jews* looked upon as great sinners, and with whom they would keep no correspondence, such, for instance, as the publicans, should be received into covenant with God. The second, That *Christ* communicates himself to those that seek him; and that when he offers himself to us, and calls us to him, we should obey his call with readiness and joy, as *Zaccheus* did. The third, That those who are possessed of ill-gotten goods, ought to restore them; and that the rich are particularly obliged to be charitable to the poor. As for the parable of the man that was going a long journey, and left ten pounds, that is to say, several sums of money in the hands of his servants, our Lord proposed it, as *St. Luke* observes, I. To undeceive those that thought he would be declared king, and that his kingdom would be attended with worldly pomp and splendor. And, II. To make them comprehend that he should be rejected; but that such as would not submit themselves to him, should feel the effects of his power, and undergo the punishment of their rebellion; whilst those that have served him faithfully shall be exalted to great glory. The use we are to make of this parable, is to observe from thence, first, that God grants us his light and grace, to the end that every one of us, according to his station, may improve them to his glory, and to the salvation of others. Secondly, That some make a right use of his grace, and others abuse it. Thirdly, That when our Lord shall come to judge mankind, he will gloriously reward those that shall have employed his gifts in the manner most agreeable to his intentions, but will punish with rigour and justice, the ingratitude and treachery of those that have abused them.

CHAP. XIX. 29—48.

- I. **CHRIST** makes his royal entry into *Jerusalem*.
 II. He weeps for the destruction of that city.
 III. He drives out of the temple those that profaned it.

REFLECTIONS.

CHRIST was pleased to make his entry into *Jerusalem*, the *Sunday* before his death, to shew that he was that king spoken of by the prophets; but he did it after a very plain manner, riding upon a young ass, that it might appear that his kingdom was not of this world. This circumstance must have made the greater impression upon the apostles, as *Christ*, telling them where they should find the ass, had given them a new proof of his infinite knowledge. We ought very seriously to reflect upon this event, in which we so sensibly perceive the glory of *Jesus Christ*, and, at the same time, his perfect meekness; and it should engage us to rejoice, and praise the Lord, as did those who formerly attended *Christ*, when they saw his miracles, if we duly consider what our Saviour has done to redeem mankind, and establish his kingdom in the world. We are next to observe, that when our Saviour came in this manner to *Jerusalem*, he lamented with tears the desolation of that city, and the calamities that were soon to fall upon the *Jews*, because they had mistaken and neglected the time of God's gracious visitation. This was a very plain proof of the goodness of the Lord, even to such as had rejected him; and who, that very week, were to crucify him; and it shews us likewise, that none perish but through their own fault, and because they do not lay hold of the season in which God visits them, and offers them his grace; and that therefore we should know the things that belong to our peace before they be hid from our eyes. Lastly, *Christ*, by driving out of the temple those that sold and traded in it, made appear his divine authority, as well as his great zeal. This
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action of our Saviour suggests two reflections: One is, that we grievously offend God, and expose ourselves to his wrath, when we behave ourselves irreverently in places set apart for public worship, and when our worship of him is false and hypocritical: this is infinitely more odious to him than the abuse that was introduced among the *Jews*, of buying and selling in the temple the things necessary for sacrifices. The other is, that we ought, in imitation of our Saviour, to oppose impiety and irreligion, and promote with zeal the glory of God, and the cause of religion.

CHAP. XX. 1—18.

I. *CHRIST* answers the chief among the *Jews*, who examined him whence he had his authority. And, II. proposes to them the parable of the husbandmen.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to remark, that when the *Jews* demanded of *Christ* whence he received his authority, our Lord, knowing that this question did not proceed from a sincere desire to be informed, but only from a design to surprise him, did not think proper to answer them. But to convince them that their ignorance was affected and malicious, and that they might easily have discerned that his authority came from God, he asked them whether the baptism of *John* was from heaven, or of men; to which they made no reply, not daring to speak their thoughts. The silence of the Pharisees was a sufficient proof of their hypocrisy and malice, and that a direct answer would not have satisfied them. God never refuses to reveal himself to those who have an honest heart, and sincerely desire to know the truth. But those who only seek a pretence to reject it, are given up to their ignorance and perverseness, especially when they have already had sufficient means of knowing the truth, and have rejected it. By the similitude of the husbandmen our Lord designed figuratively

ratively to represent, 1. That the chief of the *Jews* would crucify him, as their fathers had killed the prophets. 2. That he should nevertheless become the supreme head and king of the church. 3. That the *Jews* would shortly be overtaken with God's judgments, and deprived of his covenant. 4. That the Gospel would be preached to the Gentiles with surprising success, and that they should enjoy all the privileges of being in covenant with God. This prophetic parable was clearly explained in the glory to which our Lord, after his resurrection and ascension, was exalted, by the destruction of *Jerusalem*, the dispersion of the *Jews*, and the calling of the Gentiles. However, that which befel the *Jews*, ought to be an example to us, and teach us, that Christians who despise God's grace, and disobey the Gospel, shall not go unpunished, since they no less reject *Christ*, than the *Jews* themselves did formerly.

CHAP. XX. 19—47:

THE second part of this chapter contains the four following heads. I. The answer of *Jesus Christ* to the question, whether it were lawful to pay tribute to the emperor. II. His answer to another question of the Sadduces about the resurrection. III. The question he himself put to the Pharisees, concerning the Messiah's being called the son of *David*. IV. A warning to take care of the Scribes and Pharisees.

REFLECTIONS.

THE design of the Pharisees, in asking our Saviour whether it was lawful to pay tribute to the Emperor, was to lay a snare for him. They wanted a pretence to accuse him either of being an enemy to *Cesar*, if he should say that tribute was not to be paid; or no friend to his own nation, if he should say it was. But *Jesus*, by his profound wisdom, discovered and avoided the snare; bidding them *render to Cesar the things which are Cesar's, and unto God the things which are God's.*

God's. Let us learn from hence, to submit to the authority of princes, strictly paying that obedience and allegiance which is due to them; and at the same time religiously discharging our duty to God. We may observe the same wisdom in his answer to the Sadducees, who thought to have puzzled him by their question about the resurrection. He lets them know, that their question was trifling, since after the resurrection we shall be immortal, and like unto angels, and that there will be no marrying in the next life. Then he shewed them that the dead must rise, by putting them in mind, that God declares himself the God of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, even after their death; whence it follows, that since God is not the God of the dead but of the living, those holy patriarchs, and all those who imitate their faith, subsist after death, and that they shall rise again. This discourse of our Lord ought fully to convince us that the dead will be raised, and should engage us to live pure and godly lives; to the end that, as our Saviour says, we may be in the number of those who shall be thought worthy to partake of eternal life, and of the resurrection of the righteous. The question which *Christ* put to the Scribes, how the Messiah could be both the son and lord of *David*, tended to shew them, that the dignity of the Messiah was much greater than they imagined; and though they thought themselves the best interpreters of the ancient prophecies, their ignorance was very great in this and many other instances. Nevertheless, he would not explain that question to them more fully, because it would have been useless, by reason of their unteachable temper. Thus does our Lord give up to their own ignorance those who will not be instructed. What our Saviour says against the Scribes and Pharisees, shews, that covetousness, pride, and hypocrisy, are most odious vices; and that we ought to beware of those in whom they are found, and most carefully avoid the same vices ourselves.

CHAP. XXI.

THIS chapter contains four things. I. The judgment which *Christ* passed upon the poor widow's offering. II. What he said to his disciples concerning the signs which should precede the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the end of the world. III. He represents how terrible this destruction would be. IV. He exhorts his disciples to watch and pray, and live soberly, that they might not be surprised by his coming.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE judgment which *Christ* passed upon the offering of that widow, who threw two small pieces of money into a box, in which private persons put what they had a mind to give for the service of the temple, teaches us, that what we devote to pious and charitable uses is pleasing to God, when given with a willing mind; and that the offerings of the poor, when made heartily, and according to their power, are as well received as those of the rich. II. We are to consider, that whatever our Lord had foretold of the signs that should precede the destruction of *Jerusalem* and the temple, came to pass at the time, and in the manner he had foretold. Several false teachers appeared, who took upon them the name of the Messiah; *Judea* was ruined by war, by famine, and by pestilence; the disciples of our Lord were persecuted by the *Jews*; the *Romans* besieged and took *Jerusalem*, and destroyed both it and the temple; the inhabitants of the city were reduced to the utmost extremity, were put to the sword, and exposed to all the dreadful calamities of war. The remains of this people were dispersed over all the world, and are so to this day, and *Jerusalem* never recovered from its ruins. And all these things came to pass at the time *Christ* had foretold, that is, about forty years after his crucifixion. Such clear and express predictions as these, which have been, and still are so exactly verified by the

the event, will not suffer us to doubt that *Christ* was sent from God, and that his doctrine is truly divine. This destruction of God's once favourite people, and of a city which he had chosen to place his name in, ought to inspire us all with fear: and as this destruction can be ascribed to nothing but their sin in rejecting and crucifying our Lord; this was a proof that he was the Messiah. Thereby we may also discover what Christians are to expect, who reject him by their unbelief and disobedience. What we read in this chapter should remind us of the end of the world, and the day of judgment; of the horror and despair of the wicked, and the joy of the righteous at that day. Lastly, Our Lord, informs us, that the way to be prepared for his coming, is to live soberly, and to watch and pray continually. This is what our Lord exhorts us to in the following expressions, which conclude this discourse: *Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass; and to stand before the son of man.*

CHAP. XXII. 1—38.

THE Evangelist begins here the history of *Christ's* passion; and relates, I. The agreement *Judas* made with the *Jews* to betray our Lord. II. How *Christ* celebrated the passover, and instituted the holy sacrament. III. His prediction of the treachery of *Judas*. IV. What he said to the Apostles, when they disputed who of them should be greatest in their master's kingdom. V. Our Lord's foretelling St. *Peter's* fall and repentance, and warning his disciples of his approaching death.

REFLECTIONS.

THE first reflection to be made here, relates to the resolution *Judas* took of betraying his master to the
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Jews:

Jews: And though *Jesus* gave him to understand that he knew his design, this perfidious disciple would not desist from putting it in execution. As it was the love of money which induced him to commit this treacherous action, we see plainly that this passion, which men are apt to think not very dangerous, blinds men, and hardens their hearts to such a degree, as renders them capable of the worst of sins, and proof against all arguments to the contrary. II. Our Lord's keeping the passover with his disciples, and instituting the blessed sacrament, suggest these two reflections; first, that he observed to the end of his life all that was prescribed in the *Jewish* law; which should be an argument with us not to neglect or despise any divine institution: and secondly, that we should reverence and respect this holy sacrament which our Saviour then appointed to remain, even to the end of the world, a memorial of this passion and death, and ought to partake of this holy sacrament with true devotion, as often as we approach the Lord's table. III. It is to be observed, that our Lord's speaking at his last supper, of the coming of the kingdom of God, gave occasion to his disciples to ask him which of them should be the greatest in his kingdom, which they supposed would be a temporal one. But *Jesus* exhorted them to correct their carnal notions of his kingdom, and to entertain more humble thoughts; promising, however, to exalt them to great glory if they continued faithful unto the end. These lessons of humility and renunciation of worldly greatness, which *Christ* gave his apostles so often, teach us that it is not lawful eagerly to seek after honour and glory; but as we are the disciples of a master who was humility itself, we ought not to think of being raised one above another; and should ever remember, that the true glory to which we should aspire, is that which *Christ* reserves in the kingdom of God for such as shall have been faithful to him, and continued obedient in the midst of those temptations and trials to which they shall have been exposed. Our Lord foretold that St. *Peter*

Peter would deny him; but he assured him at the same time, that he had prayed for him, that his faith should not fail. The sequel confirmed the truth both of the prediction and promise. We are extremely weak; know but little of ourselves; and our greatest danger arises from presumption: But that which either secures us from falling, or raises us up again, is a prudent distrust of ourselves, and reliance on the grace of God. Let us therefore with great humility and fervency implore his grace, and pray to God that he would vouchsafe to secure us against our own weakness, and support us in such manner that our faith may not fail.

CHAP. XXII. 39—71.

I. *CHRIST'S* agony in the garden. II. He is taken by *Judas*. III. *St. Peter* denies him, and afterwards weeps bitterly for his sin. IV. *Jesus* is condemned before the *Jewish* council.

REFLECTIONS.

IN the relation *St. Luke* gives of our Lord's sufferings in the garden, we may observe the great sorrow of his soul, his prayers to God, and his resignation. The anguish and trouble he endured, shew that he was subject to all the infirmities of our nature; the prospect of his approaching death filled him with sore amazement; he even needed an angel to strengthen him; but this trouble and anguish had nothing in it but what was innocent; and therefore we must not imagine his sufferings were like those of the wicked, or that God was angry with him: his prayers teach us to seek our comfort and strength, by addressing ourselves to God under affliction; and his resignation to the will of his father, should teach us to submit ourselves in all things, even in the sorest trials, to what God shall be pleased to do with us. After a state of distress, like that of our Saviour, we should never be discouraged in our afflictions, if, like him, we resign ourselves

ourselves entirely to the divine will. II. From the manner of our Saviour's being apprehended, we may observe, that though he knew the design of *Judas*, and could have escaped death, yet he delivered himself into the hands of the *Jews*; being resolved to die, that he might fulfil the will of his Father. III. The action of St. *Peter*, who smote with a sword one of the servants of the high priest, shews the concern which that apostle had for his Master, but it proceeded likewise from a rash and inconsiderate zeal, and a spirit of revenge, on which account our Lord blamed him for it. This teaches us, that violence and revenge are displeasing to *Christ*, and unworthy of his disciples; wherefore we ought to shun them, and always imitate the great meekness and patience of our Saviour, who being able to punish those that came to take him, and to defend himself against their attempts, would not do it, but even gave a proof of his goodness as well as of his power, by healing the person St. *Peter* had wounded. IV. We find here that St. *Peter*, who after he had expressed so great a zeal for his Master, for fear of death denied him three times. The fall of this apostle is a proof of our great weakness, and how easily we may be surprised by temptation, when we neglect the duties of watchfulness and prayer. However, this apostle recovered from his fall, while *Judas* fell into incurable despair. Sins which men fall into merely by surprise, are easier repented of than those which are committed obstinately and deliberately. Lastly, the relation of *Christ's* appearance before the council of the *Jews*, shews, that he was not condemned for any crime, and that he was wholly innocent, since the sentence of his condemnation was only grounded upon what he himself had said, that he was the Son of God. However, he owned the same, and submitted to so unrighteous a judgment; whereby he has given us the most convincing proof imaginable of his love, and an example of zeal and patience, which we ought always to set before our eyes.

CHAP. XXIII. 1—25.

I. *CHRIST* appears, and is accused before *Pilate*, and afterwards before *Herod*, and by both of them is declared innocent. II. *Pilate* endeavours to deliver him: But, being at length overcome by the importunity of the *Jews*, he condemns him to death.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WE observe, at first sight, the injustice and malice of the *Jews*, who, after they had themselves condemned our Lord, falsely accused him before *Pilate*; of attempting to raise a sedition among the people, and to make himself a king; and who, in spite of all that *Pilate* could say to pacify them, were so desirous of his death, that they chose rather to save the life of a murderer and a rebel, than his. II. We find by this history, that God permitted *Pilate* to send *Jesus* to king *Herod*, that, by this means, his perfect innocence might more evidently appear, since this prince also found nothing in him worthy of death. III. It is to be observed, that when our Saviour appeared before *Herod*, he did not speak to him, nor return him any answer, because the questions that prince put to him, did not proceed from any design of being better informed by him, but from a vain curiosity, and desire of seeing some miracle wrought by him. God manifests himself to those who with sincerity seek after truth; but leaves those in their blindness, who inquire after truth only out of curiosity, and in a spirit of profaneness. IV. And above all, we ought to observe the injustice of *Pilate*, who was convinced that *Christ* was wrongfully accused; desired to deliver him; and could have done it; but was afraid to do it; and, after some resistance, condemned him in complaisance to the *Jews*. This is the manner of unjust judges, and in general, of all those that sin against light, and who pay a greater regard to men, and to motives of policy, interest, and ambition, than to what God, justice, and

conscience, require of them. This example likewise shews, that it is to no purpose to have a few good thoughts, and a faint desire of doing our duty, and even to withstand temptation for a time, if we give way to it at last, but is rather an aggravation of one's fault: and therefore upon all occasions we are bound to follow the dictates of our conscience, without suffering any sollicitations, or other reasons whatever, to withdraw us from our duty.

CHAP. XXIII. 26—56.

ST. *Luke* relates, I. What happened when *Jesus* was led forth to be crucified, and whilst he was upon the cross, and his death. II. The prodigies that then happened. III. His burial.

REFLECTIONS.

THESE are the observations which we may make upon the several circumstances of our Lord's passion. I. We see by what he said to the women of *Jerusalem*, who were weeping for him, that at the very time when they were going so unjustly to put him to death, he was more sensible of the calamities that were coming upon the *Jews*, than of his own sufferings. This is a most pathetic example of meekness and patience, and ought to convince us of the perfect love of *Christ*, and induce us to pardon those who use us unjustly, and to be more concerned for others than for ourselves. II. This prayer, which *Christ* made at the time of his crucifixion, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*; ought to inspire us with the like sentiments. III. Another circumstance, and which is worthy of our attention, is what St. *Luke* relates about the two thieves that were crucified with our Saviour. In one of them, we see a terrible instance of obduracy; which shews how far men may carry their impiety and wickedness: But in the other who reproved his companion, and called upon *Jesus* as his Saviour and King, though he saw him nailed to the cross, we may remark a wonder-

wonderful faith, a hearty repentance, and a profound humility. In the promise our Lord made him, *This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise*, we have an instance of God's mercy to penitent sinners, which, however, must not be so abused, as to imagine that we may, without endangering our salvation, put off our conversion to the end of our lives. This promise does likewise assure us, that those who die in the favour of God, do enter into a state of happiness immediately after their death. IV. *Christ's* death and burial are to be considered as the last degree of his humiliation, and the accomplishment of that sacrifice which he offered to God for the atonement of our sins. Thus we find therein the foundation of our faith and confidence, and powerful motives not to fear death. Lastly, We are to consider, that the several prodigies which happened whilst our Lord was expiring upon the cross, were designed to shew that he was really the Son of God, which effect they actually produced upon the centurion who was appointed to guard the cross, and all the people that were present, particularly those who were his friends and followers in this life. But this is what appeared yet more plainly afterwards, when he arose the third day from the dead.

CHAP. XXIV.

I. **CHRIST** being risen from the dead, angels first tell the news to the women that went to his sepulchre. II. Afterwards he appeared to two of his disciples as they were going to *Emmaus*. III. And at last, to the Apostles. IV. St. *Luke* concludes his Gospel, in relating the last orders which our Lord gave his Apostles, and his ascension.

REFLECTIONS.

ST. *Luke* informs us in this chapter, that *Christ* being risen, the women that went to his sepulchre, received the first news of his resurrection from the
ee 2 angels,

angels, and that afterwards he appeared to two Disciples, and lastly to all the Apostles; who were fully satisfied of his resurrection, by conversing with him, by touching him, and seeing them eat in their presence. Our Lord's appearing at several times to his Disciples, proves that he is risen, and ought powerfully to strengthen our faith and hope, which are built upon his resurrection. In the discourse which our Saviour had with the two disciples in the way to *Emmaus*, we may perceive, that though they preserved a tender remembrance of their Master, and had even some hopes of his rising again, they did not yet believe it, and that their faith was as yet very weak; which proves that they did not believe the resurrection without sufficient grounds, nor till they were fully convinced of it. On the other hand, we observe, that *Christ* instructed them in the mystery of his death and resurrection, by explaining the prophecies relating to them. This should induce us to read and meditate upon the Prophets, since we find their predictions so proper to confirm us in the faith, especially since the event has perfectly cleared up and verified them. In the last commands that *Christ* left with his disciples, we find an abstract of the doctrines of the Gospel, which may be reduced to this: That *Jesus Christ* died, that he rose again, and that he sent his apostles to declare throughout the world the remission of sins, and to persuade them to repent. Lastly, The ascension of our Lord ought fully to convince us that he is the Son of God: And as the apostles, when they saw him ascend into heaven, worshipped him, and returned to *Jerusalem* rejoicing and praising God; we ought also to worship him as our God and Saviour, to obey him, and to rejoice continually, whilst we reflect on the glory to which he is exalted at the right hand of his Father, and firmly hope to be one day received into his glory ourselves. *Amen.*

The end of the Gospel according to St. LUKE.

THE
G O S P E L
ACCORDING TO
ST. J O H N.

ARGUMENT.

The Gospel according to St. John was writ a long time after the other Gospels, about sixty years, it is thought, after the ascension of Christ. We meet in this Gospel with several of our Lord's discourses, and many remarkable particulars of his life, sufferings, and resurrection, which are not related by the other three Evangelists.

CHAP. I.

THIS chapter has three parts. I. *St. John* teaches us, that *Jesus Christ* is God; that he was made man, and came into the world to save mankind, and to make all those who believe in him the children of God. II. He relates the testimony which *John* the Baptist bare of our Saviour, letting the *Jews* know the dignity of his person, and the nature of his office. III. *Jesus* makes himself known to *Andrew* and *Peter*, *Philip* and *Nathanael*.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

THE first part of this chapter instructs us in the infinite dignity of the person of *Jesus Christ*, and the end for which he came into the world. As for his person, *St. John* teaches us, that *Jesus Christ*, who is here called the Word, is God; and that this Word was made flesh, that is to say, that *Jesus* was made man, and assumed our nature. Thus, one of the first and most important truths of Christianity, is to believe that *Jesus Christ* is both God and man. And the divinity of his person should convince us of the divinity of his doctrine, and make us acknowledge God's infinite love, in giving his own Son for our redemption.

II. We see, that the end for which *Christ* came into the world, was, to be the light of the world, to enlighten mankind with the knowledge of God, and to purchase for them that should receive him, and believe in him, the right of becoming his children. We likewise learn, how great the excellence of the Gospel is, and the obligation we lie under, of receiving with faith and thanksgiving, that wholesome doctrine preached by the only Son of God; and of shewing by our obedience, that we are his children by adoption.

III. *St. John* informs us, that *John* the Baptist was sent from God to the *Jews*, to let them know who *Christ* was, and prepare them to receive him, not as a temporal, but as a spiritual King, and as a Saviour that should atone for the sins of mankind, and would pour upon them the gifts of God's Holy Spirit. It is for this reason, that *John* the Baptist said, *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.* And, *This is he which baptiseth with the Holy Ghost.* The pardon of sins, and the power of the Holy Ghost, which regenerates and sanctifies us, are therefore the two principal graces that *Christ* has acquired for us, and to which we are bound to aspire.

IV. We ought likewise to observe the humility, zeal, and faithfulness which *John* the Baptist exerted, by owning that he was not the Messiah, but only his forerunner, and by abasing himself

himself so much below *Jesus Christ*. Thus we ought likewise to entertain humble sentiments of ourselves, never seek our own glory, but that of *Christ* alone; and to labour every one in his calling; and, to the utmost of his power, to make him known to men, and to bring them to him. V. We see how *Jesus Christ*, as soon as ever he entered upon his ministry, made choice of his disciples; he did so, because he designed to make use of them in preaching the Gospel throughout the world, and to the end they might bear witness to his life, his doctrine, his miracles, his death and resurrection. The great joy of these first apostles, at finding the Messiah, and their earnestness to follow him, teaches us, that our greatest happiness is to know *Christ*, and inviolably to adhere to him. *Christ's* commendation of *Nathanael*, saying, *Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile*, ought to be well observed. By that we see our Lord had a perfect knowledge of all things, and that the quality which he chiefly considers, and which he expects in his disciples, is purity of heart, an upright intention, a great aversion to hypocrisy, and a sincere love to truth and holiness.

CHAP. II.

I. *CHRIST* changes water into wine at the marriage in *Cana*. II. He goes to *Jerusalem*, and drives out of the temple those that profaned it. III. He works some miracles in that city at the feast of the passover.

REFLECTIONS.

THE miracle that *Christ* wrought, by changing water into wine at the marriage of *Cana*, has this remarkable circumstance, that it was his first miracle, and that he began by that to manifest his divine power and calling, in presence of the Blessed Virgin his mother, of his disciples, and several other persons which caused his fame to be spread throughout *Galilee*, and his

his disciples to believe on him. II. For the same reason, when he came to *Jerusalem*, he drove out of the temple those who bought and sold there. He did the same three years after, a little before his death. *Christ* acting thus in the temple, which he called his father's house, was pleased to give a proof, at the very beginning of his ministry, of his divine authority, and of his great zeal; which was taken notice of by the apostles, who applied to him these words: *The zeal of thy house has eaten me up*. What we are to learn from hence, is, to be filled with great zeal for the glory of God, to oppose every thing that is contrary to it, and to shew a respect for the places that are devoted to the service of God; and, in general, for all that belongs to religion. III. It is to be observed, that the *Jews* required of *Christ* some proofs of his authority: whereupon he told them; *Destroy this temple, and I will build it again in three days*. By which he meant, that the strongest proof he could give of his receiving his authority from God, was, that he would rise from the dead the third day; but he spoke in figurative and dark terms: it not being proper, as yet, to speak more plainly concerning his death and resurrection. The last thing *St. John* relates here, is, that several people believed in *Jesus* when they saw the miracles he did. But that *Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men*:—And *knew what was in man*. We ought carefully to attend to this place, where it is said, that *Christ* knows all men, and all that passes in their hearts, and, particularly, that he does not look upon all those who call themselves Christians to be his true disciples. Thus we must not pretend to be acceptable to him, unless the profession we make of believing in him be sincere, nor unless we shew the truth of it by our obedience.

CHAP. III.

IN this chapter *St. John* relates, I. The discourse between *Jesus Christ* and *Nicodemus*; in which, under the figure of a second birth, and of water, he shews,

shews, that men must be wholly renewed, and inwardly sanctified by the Holy Ghost, if they would become his disciples, and enter into the kingdom of heaven.

II. Next he makes mention, after a figurative manner, of his death. He informs him of the design of his coming into the world, and shews what is the cause of the unbelief and perdition of men. III. *John* the Baptist, informed by his disciples that a great number of people followed *Christ*, expresses great joy at it, and declares openly, that *Christ* was infinitely more excellent than he; that he was the Son of God, and that none but such as believed in him could be saved.

REFLECTIONS.

LET us learn, from the discourse that *Christ* had with *Nicodemus*, I. That carnal men cannot enter into the kingdom of God; and that, in order to be admitted there, we must become new creatures, and entertain thoughts and inclinations that will lead us to the knowledge of the truth, and to enquire after spiritual things. II. This may likewise teach us, that since it is by the spirit of God alone that we can be thus regenerated, we ought to implore fervently and continually the grace of that holy spirit, and to make a right use of it when God shall grant it to us. III. *Christ* gives us here an abstract of the Gospel, saying, *That God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, to the end, that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but have everlasting life.* These words, and those which follow; shew plainly, that the gift which God has made to mankind of his Son, is the greatest token he ever gave them of his love; that faith in *Christ* is the only means of being saved; and if there be any who do not believe, but reject the light of the Gospel, it only proceeds from their being addicted to sin, and from a heart depraved and corrupted by their passions; but that those who have a love to virtue never fail to approve of the doctrine of *Christ*. From whence we ought to consider of how great importance it is to divest

divest ourselves of our passions, and to purify our hearts with a sincere love of truth and virtue. We have heard the testimony of *John* the Baptist gave of our Lord, by a public confession that *Jesus* was greater than he, and how great satisfaction he conceived when he was informed, that the glory of our Saviour began to spread itself. These are arguments of the profound humility and great zeal of that faithful forerunner of the Messiah; and thus we ought always to bear witness of the truth, and to seek not our own glory, but that of our Saviour, in such manner, that the advancement of his kingdom, and the salvation of men, may be the principal object of our wishes, and beget in us the greatest joy. We learn further, from this discourse of *John* the Baptist, that *Christ* being the Son of God, and having received from his Father a power without bounds, it is only by faith, and by a sincere obedience to his doctrine, that we can obtain salvation; and that those who disobey him, continue exposed to condemnation and death. This is what is expressed in the last verse of this chapter by these words, which contain the substance of the Christian doctrine: *He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*

CHAP. IV.

I. *CHRIST* going from *Judea* to *Galilee*, and passing through *Samaria*, discourses with a *Samaritan* woman, and makes himself known to her; upon which she believed on him, as several other *Samaritans* did afterwards. II. Arriving in *Galilee*, he heals the son of a nobleman of that country. For the better understanding this chapter it must be observed, that the *Samaritans* were originally partly *Jews* and partly *Gentiles*; that they worshipped the true God in a temple built upon mount *Gerizim*, but that they did not serve him in the temple of *Jerusalem*, nor in the manner which he had required; upon which account there was great enmity between them and the *Jews*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE first reflection that is to be made here is, that *Christ*, meeting with a *Samaritan* woman near a well, in his wisdom and goodness made use of that occasion to instruct her, and to bring her to the knowledge of the truth, by speaking to her concerning himself and his doctrine, under the similitude of water. The manner in which our Lord mentioned to her this spiritual water, and the wholesome effects which it produces, is a lesson to us, that the knowledge and grace of *Jesus Christ* is the most precious gift that God ever gave to men, and what we ought to desire with the greatest fervency. II. The second instruction is, that the grace of God, and his covenant, is no longer appropriated to one nation, or to one peculiar place, as was pretended both by the *Jews* and *Samaritans*, but that all men, without distinction, may be partakers of it. And, III. That the true worship which God requires of us is, not only that which is visible and external, but that of the heart; and that as he is a *spirit*, they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. IV. We see, that the disciples of our Lord urging him to take some food, received this answer from him: *My meat is to do the will of him that sent me.* And to shew them that they should be ready to labour, as he did, in the conversion of sinners, he uses the similitude of an approaching harvest. Let us gather from hence, that there is nothing which we ought to take greater pleasure and satisfaction in, than in doing the will of God, and instructing our neighbour; and that all of us ought thus to employ ourselves with our utmost zeal. V. The conversion of the *Samaritan* woman, and several of the inhabitants of the town of *Sychar*, is an event which shews, that the Messiah did not come for the sake of the *Jews* only, but that other nations likewise were to be admitted to the benefits of his coming into the world. This conversion, and the eagerness of the woman to inform the inhabitants of her town of what had happened,

pened, and to bring them to *Christ*, is a lesson also to us, that we should receive with readiness the Gospel when it is preached to us; and, moreover, contribute, all that in us lies, to bring over our neighbour to the faith, by our exhortations, and by our good examples. Lastly, *St. John* informs us, that *Christ* being returned into *Galilee*, healed there the son of a nobleman of *Capernaum* by his word only, and though the sick man himself was not present. Thus our Lord thought fit to give new examples of his power and goodness in that country, that he might make himself known to the *Jews*, and induce them to believe in him,

CHAP. V.

CHRIST cures a man that had been afflicted with the palsy thirty-eight years. And as the *Jews* found fault with him for working this miracle on the sabbath-day, he represents how unreasonable they were to condemn him. The substance of what he said on that occasion, is as follows: He acquaints the *Jews*, that he wrought his miracles by the power of God; that they ought not to be surprised at his attributing to himself so much authority, and calling God his father; that he would do greater miracles; and that he would raise the dead; that he would judge the world; that he would bestow eternal life upon such as believed in him; and condemn all those that should reject him. *Christ* adds, that he did not desire to be believed upon his bare word, that he was sent by God: that the *Jews* might satisfy themselves by the testimony of *John* the Baptist, which had great weight with them; by the miracles he wrought, and by the predictions of *Moses* and the prophets. Lastly, He complains of the unbelief of the *Jews*, who would not have recourse to him to obtain everlasting life; and tells them, that this unbelief proceeded from hearts void of the love of God, and full of self-love, and of the glory of the world.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WE discover, in the cure of the paralytic, whose history St. *John* here gives us, the wonderful power of our Lord, who, by his word only, entirely cured a man that had lost the use of his limbs for thirty-eight years; which was as great a miracle as that which was done at the pool at *Bethesda*. We see that the Lord had compassion on this paralytical man, asking him, whether he desired to be healed, and at the same time actually healing him in an unexpected manner. Whence we may observe, that our gracious Redeemer is always disposed to communicate his favours to men, and to deliver them from their miseries; that he even prevents them, and offers his mercies to them; but that nobody is admitted to partake of them, but those who desire them, and who, like the paralytical man, lay hold of those offers which *Christ* so graciously makes them. II. We should carefully attend to that which *Christ* said to the sick man: *Behold, thou art made whole, sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee*. This is a warning to those whom God has delivered from any infirmity, or any other misfortune, to avoid, for the time to come, falling into sin, for fear of obliging God to punish them more severely. The discourse in which *Christ* proves to the *Jews*, by several arguments, that he was sent from God, shews us, that our faith is built upon a solid foundation, upon convincing and incontestible proofs; to fortify ourselves therefore in the faith, we ought seriously to weigh the proofs contained in this chapter, and add to them those which the *Jews* had not at that time, and which are drawn from the resurrection of our Saviour; from the establishment of the Christian Religion; and from the testimony of the apostles. Besides this general observation, we may make the three following particular ones upon this discourse of *Christ*. I. That God gave our Lord an unlimited power, which, as he exerted formerly in doing miracles, he will display yet more pompously when he shall come to raise the dead,
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and to judge all men, both the righteous and the wicked. We ought therefore to revere this power of the Son of God, to obey him, and to honour him, as we honour the Father, that we may be raised one day to life eternal, and not to condemnation. II. Since *Christ* alledges the testimony of the holy Scriptures, and of *Moses* in particular, and exhorts the *Jews* to search and examine them, it follows, that we ought often to read, and carefully to meditate upon the writings of the Old Testament, as well as those of the New, since this is the way to be confirmed in the faith, and to obtain everlasting life. III. What *Christ* said to the *Jews* about their unbelief, and the cause of it, is a lesson to us, that if there be any people that will not come to our Lord to obtain life, the reason is, that they have not the love of God in them, and that they are slaves to their passions. Above all, *Christ* declares that the love of the world, and the glory of it, and the desire to be approved and well esteemed of by men, is one of the greatest impediments to faith and salvation.

CHAP. VI. 1—21.

I. *CHRIST* feeds five thousand persons with five loaves and two fishes. II. He walks upon the water to go to his disciples, and stills a tempest.

REFLECTIONS.

THE feeding five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes, was a miracle which the apostles did not expect, though they had been witnesses of so many other miracles. This miracle our Lord wrought as much as to increase and strengthen their faith, and convince them of his almighty power, as to supply the necessities of the multitude that followed him. This, therefore, is one of the most illustrious miracles our Lord wrought, by reason of the great numbers that were witnesses of it. *St. John* observes, that those people were so affected with this miracle, that they

not only affirmed that *Christ* was the prophet, and the Messiah whom the *Jews* expected, but they would likewise have declared him king; for which reason he withdrew to a solitary place, being unwilling that any sedition or commotion should be raised for his sake. This proceeding of the *Jews*, was an effect of the opinion they had taken up, that the Messiah was to be a temporal king; but the retreat of *Christ* shewed that his kingdom was not an earthly one; which should teach us, not to seek our glory in this world; and, above all, to shun the pomp and splendor of the world, and to behave ourselves always with great humility.

III. In the other miracle that our Saviour wrought in behalf of his apostles, and which must needs have made a deep impression on them, when he came to them, walking upon the water, he gave a most convincing proof of his care and love for his disciples; suffering them to be exposed to a storm, that he might prove them, and afterwards deliver them in a manner more surprising, and fuller of comfort, than if he had been with them at first. Such is the issue of the trials and afflictions with which God visits those he loves; sooner or later he comes to their assistance; and the evils they are exposed to manifest his love to them, and increase their consolation and their joy.

CHAP. VI. 22—71.

I. **O**UR Lord and Saviour having miraculously fed the people with five loaves and two fishes, and observing their eagerness in following him, takes occasion from thence to exhort them to seek for spiritual food, and such as would make them live for ever, rather than for bodily sustenance. II. He then tells them, that he was that food, the true bread from heaven, and that those who eat of that bread shall attain everlasting life. III. He adds, by way of explanation of what he had before said, that this food was his flesh and his blood, which he would give for the life of the world: by which he hinted at the benefits of his own death;

death; but he expressed himself figuratively, and somewhat obscurely, because he would not yet openly declare that he should be put to death. IV. Some of his disciples being offended at this discourse, *Christ* tells them, that these words were to be understood in a spiritual sense; but that did not hinder several among them from forsaking him.

REFLECTIONS.

THE first and chief instruction this discourse of our Saviour furnishes us with, is to labour much more earnestly to procure that food that causes men to live for ever, than that which only serves to support a temporal and fading life. Our Lord has told us plainly, that he himself is this heavenly bread, and that this food of the soul is only to be found in him, and in his Gospel; and that the will of his father who had sent him was, that all that believe in him should have eternal life, and that he should raise them up at the last day. What our Lord said upon this occasion was obscure to those that heard him. The *Jews* could not conceive how *Christ* was that bread that descended from heaven; and how it was necessary to eat his flesh, and drink his blood, in order to obtain everlasting life; but to us Christians this ought to be very clear, forasmuch as we know that the death of *Jesus Christ* is the true food of the soul, and the only principle of spiritual life and immortality. He tells us himself, that his words are spirit and life; that is to say, they are to be understood after a spiritual manner; and, that to eat the flesh of *Christ*, and drink his blood, means nothing else, but to come to him, and to believe in him. Only it is necessary that this faith should be sincere, and attended with love, trust, and obedience, and that it should unite us so closely to *Christ*, that nothing should be able to separate us from him. The question which our Lord put to his apostles, whether they would likewise forsake him, as several of his disciples had done; and St. *Peter's* reply, *Lord, to whom should we go?*

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oblige us to consider, that *Christ* forces none into his service; that the obedience he requires, is free and voluntary; that, however, we ought never to leave him, since he only has the words of eternal life; and that, being the Son of the living God, he is the sole author of salvation. The last words of this chapter, where it is said, that *Jesus* knew from the beginning that *Judas*, who was of the number of the twelve apostles, would betray him; teach us, that the Lord knows all those that call themselves his disciples, and that he discerns those who do not believe in him, from such as are faithful to him. An external profession of Christianity is not sufficient, and there is nothing but a true faith and steady obedience, that can assure our heart before God, and make us accepted by him, who sees the hearts of all men, and who will render to them all according to their works.

CHAP. VII. 1—30.

I. *ST. John* relates here a journey that *Christ* made to *Jerusalem* at the feast of tabernacles. II. The different judgments that men passed upon him. And, III. His answer to the *Jews*, who found fault with him for his having cured a paralytical person, some months before, at the feast of the passover, upon a sabbath-day.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE first thing to be observed in this chapter, is, that our Lord refused to go publicly to *Jerusalem*, and in the company of his relations: he acted thus out of prudence, that he might avoid all pomp, and that he might not be exposed to the rage of the *Jews*, who sought to put him to death. That which he said to some of his relations, that *the world*, that is to say, the unbelieving *Jews*, could not hate them, but hated him, because he testified of it, that the works thereof were evil; contains a certain truth, namely, that worldly people love those that are like them, but hate

those whose lives and discourses condemn their wicked actions. II. We see here the various judgments the people passed upon *Christ*; but, above all, we may observe the blindness and malice of the *Jews*, who, without minding the proofs which our Lord, by his miracles, gave of his divine mission, and without being moved with his mild, and, at the same time, strong arguments, in vindication of what he had done, and to prove that his doctrine was from heaven, accused him of breaking the law of God, and of being possessed of a devil; and would even have put him to death. This procedure of the *Jews*, who thus resisted and hardened themselves against the truth, shews, that prejudice and passion may blind men to such a degree, that nothing can undeceive them; and that they are even offended at those things which tend most to their edification and confirmation. What our Saviour says on this occasion, deserves our particular attention: *If any man will do the will of my Father, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.* Let us gather from hence, this important lesson, that the principal disposition we ought to be in, in order to know the doctrine of *Jesus Christ*, and to discover the truth and beauty of it, is to have an upright heart, and a sincere desire to do the will of God, as far as it is and can be known to us; but those who are not thus disposed, can never come to the knowledge of the truth. Lastly, It likewise appears from this history, that though the *Jews* had formed a design of putting *Jesus* to death, they could do him no harm, nor durst any man lay hands on him. The wicked can hurt good men, only when, and as God is pleased to permit; and, whatever men may enterprize, the counsel of the Lord that shall stand.

CHAP. VII. 31—53.

THE Pharisees being enraged because the people were affected at the discourses and miracles of our Lord, sent some persons to seize on him; but he continued

tinued to speak with so much authority and evidence, and exhorted the people so pathetically, that several acknowledged him to be a prophet; and that some even believed he was the Messiah; so that those who were ordered to lay hold of him, returned without daring to do it; at which the Pharisees were extremely irritated.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE first thing we have here to observe, is, that the discourses and miracles of *Christ* produced very different effects, forasmuch as the people were extremely affected with them, and filled with admiration; whereas, on the contrary, the Pharisees were so provoked by them, that they would have caused our Lord to be apprehended. Thus we may see how differently the word of God is received; some open their eyes and their hearts to the truth, and grow better by it; others reject it, and proceed even to hate those who propose it, and to be exasperated against them. II. We may take notice, in the discourses of our Saviour, with what evidence, meekness, and authority, he continues to apply himself to the *Jews*; and, especially, admire those kind invitations which he makes them, saying, *If any one thirst, let him come unto me and drink.* Whereby he offers them his grace, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which he was ready to pour upon them that should believe in him. He likewise makes us the same offers in the Gospel. It is our business to receive them as we ought, and to embrace them with zeal and gratitude. III. We ought to reflect upon what *St. John* says, that those who were commanded to seize our Saviour, durst not do it, but told them who sent them, that *never man spake like this man.* By which we see, on one hand, the virtue and efficacy of the word of God; and, on the other, that God renders the designs of the wicked, vain and useless whenever he pleases. Finally, it is very remarkable, that the Pharisees, instead of discovering that in opposing *Christ*, they opposed God himself;

and instead of being moved at seeing so many people bearing witness to our Lord, were more and more enraged against him, and even against the people who spoke favourably of him and his doctrine. This is a proof, that the most learned, and most distinguished in the eye of the world, are often less disposed than the mean and simple to receive the Gospel; because they are slaves to their passions, and, especially, because they are filled with pride, and a good opinion of themselves, and do not endeavour sincerely, and in the integrity of their hearts, to be instructed, and to know the truth.

CHAP. VIII. 1—29.

ST. *John* relates here, I. The history of the woman taken in adultery. II. A discourse that *Christ* had with the *Jews*, in which he told them he was the light of the world, and that they ought to believe what he told them of himself. III. He reproaches them for their blindness and unbelief, and speaks about his departure out of this world, and his death; but does it in figurative terms, and such as they could not comprehend.

REFLECTIONS.

TO understand the history of the adulterous woman, and to make a right use of it, we must observe, I. That the design of the Pharisees in bringing this woman to *Christ*, was to ensnare him; for, if he had said that she ought not to be put to death, they would have charged him with breaking the law of God; and, if he had passed sentence of condemnation on her, they would have accused him to the governor, for violating the rights of the supreme magistrate. II. If *Christ* did not condemn that woman, it was not because her crime was not great, and worthy of death, but for prudential reasons, and to shew that he sought nothing but the salvation of sinners. III. It is particularly to be observed, that our Lord said to that woman, *Go thy way, and sin no more*; which shews,

shews, that he gave, on this occasion, a proof of his mercy towards sinners, but that he was far from excusing her crime; which may also teach us, that God does not pardon sinners, but upon condition that they will not relapse into their sins. In our Saviour's discourse with the *Jews*, we may consider, I. These remarkable expressions of our Lord: *I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.* These words ought to be continually meditated upon by Christians, and should strongly engage them to make a right use of that light which lighteth them, ever following *Christ*, and walking in the way which he has marked out for us by his doctrine, and by his example, and which will certainly lead us to life and immortality. II. As the Pharisees reproached our Lord with speaking too highly of himself, he said several things to cure them of their prejudices against him, and to engage them to believe that he spake to them from God. What the Saviour of the world said upon that occasion, should have greater weight with us, in convincing us that he is the Son of God, and that his doctrine proceeds from heaven; God having given authentic testimony thereof, not only by the miracles which our Saviour wrought, but likewise by what followed his death, his resurrection, and his exaltation to heavenly glory. Lastly, We have seen that the Pharisees did not improve by the instructions of our Lord, though he spake to them with so much meekness, and what he said was attended with so much evidence, yet that they continued still in their unbelief, and that *Christ* therefore told them, that they should die in their sins. Thus men, who are enslaved to the world, and to their passions, resist the evidence and force of truth when it is proposed to them; and, by refusing to believe in *Jesus*, and to obey him, they remain in their sins, and consequently in condemnation and in death.

CHAP. VIII. 30—59.

I. *CHRIST* exhorts those among the *Jews*, who had believed in him, to persevere in his doctrine, and promises them true liberty. II. He tells the unbelieving *Jews*, who gloried in being free, and the children of *Abraham*, that they were not his children, since they did not imitate him in his faith; and reproaches them for their unbelief; at which they were so provoked, as to say very harsh things to him, and to attempt to stone him; but he escaped their rage, and retreated from them.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this discourse our Saviour teaches us, I. That when we have the happiness of knowing him, and believing in him, we ought constantly to persevere in the truth, and adhere to it more and more; which, if we do, we shall be really his disciples, and enjoy that true liberty of the children of God, which consists, as our Lord has said, in being delivered from the bondage of sin. II. What he told the *Jews*, that they were not the children of God, nor of *Abraham*, since they did not imitate the faith of the patriarch, but that they were rather the children of the devil, since they did his works, has great weight in it. We may learn from thence, that the surest token whereby to discover the children of God, is, that they do his will, and that they love those whom God loves; but those that set themselves against the truth, and against such as declare it, are the children and imitators of the devil, who is a liar, a murderer, and an enemy of the truth. III. We likewise see in this discourse of our Lord, how happy those are who receive his doctrine, and submit thereto, since he declares that they are not under the power of death. IV. We may observe next, that though *Christ* spoke to the *Jews* with so much plainness and strength of argument, they, instead of benefiting by his instructions, were
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exasperated by them, and proceeded to such a degree of rage, as to call him a *Samaritan*, and a man possessed by the devil. This is an instance of the most deplorable blindness, and the blackest malice, and shews us how dangerous it is to abandon ourselves to our passions, and to fall into unbelief. Lastly, We have in this chapter a remarkable proof of the glory and divinity of *Christ*, by his declaring that he was before *Abraham*. The infinite dignity of his person ought to convince us so much the more of the divinity of the Gospel, and our obligation to obey him, as he is our God and our Saviour.

CHAP. IX.

THIS chapter contains the history of a man that was born blind, who received his sight.

REFLECTIONS.

THE history contained in this chapter is very remarkable: besides the goodness and power of *Christ*, which evidently appear in his giving sight to the man that was born blind, as well as in all his other miracles, we see here three things well worthy our attention. I. The proceeding of the Pharisees, and the pains they took to deny this miracle: What they said for that purpose to the father and mother of the blind man, and afterwards to the blind man himself, to know whether he had been blind, and how he received his sight. The Pharisees, by all this enquiry, did not desire to find out the truth, but rather to stifle and oppose it: and, when they could not avoid seeing it, they rejected it, and slandered *Jesus*, the author of it; and at last, when they could say nothing against the certainty of the miracle, and were unable to answer the arguments of the man, they broke out into injurious language against him, and excommunicated him. In all this their procedure we may discover marks of the most violent passion, and of the most obstinate malice. Thus do the wicked shut their eyes against

against the truth, and are more and more hardened, even by those things which should affect and convert them; however, all the endeavours of the Pharisees to discredit the miracle, tended very remarkably to make it known, and prove the certainty of it. II. We may observe, in the discourse of the blind man, the ingenuity with which he spoke to the Pharisees, and confounded them, maintaining that he had been well cured; and since *Christ* had restored his sight to him, he could not be a wicked man and a deceiver, as they pretended. In reading this relation, we see the power of truth, and that the most simple persons do often judge better of things, than those who are thought to have more sense and knowledge; and, that God makes use of such people, to confound the wise men of this world. III. We see that *Christ*, knowing that this man had been excommunicated by the Pharisees for speaking the truth in their presence, made himself known to him, telling him, that he was the Son of God, and assuring him, that those who passed for the most learned, such as the Pharisees, should continue in their blindness, whilst such as were looked upon as ignorant, but who were humble and sincere, should benefit by his doctrine. Our Lord, we see, graciously receives those who love the truth, and that are persecuted by the world, and grants them new gifts and new graces; whilst those who are conceited of themselves, and obstinately reject the truth when it is offered to them, remain in their unbelief, and perish in their blindness.

CHAP. X.

WHAT is here related happened at two different times: the first part of the chapter contains a discourse which our Lord had with the *Jews*, after he had cured the man that was born blind, in which he compares himself to a good shepherd. He speaks likewise of false shepherds, and of hirelings, by which characters he describes deceivers, and particularly the Pharisees,

Pharisees. He says, that such people had nothing else in view but their own interest, and only sought to gratify their own pride and covetousness; whereas, he came into the world to procure the good and welfare of his sheep, and that he was even willing to lay down his life for them. Some months after, *Jesus* being at *Jerusalem*, at the feast of the dedication of the temple, and the *Jews* enquiring of him, whether he were the Messiah, he tells them, that his miracles shewed sufficiently who he was; that if they did not know him it proceeded from the hardness of their hearts, but that his own sheep knew him; that he would give unto them everlasting life; and that God would never suffer them to perish, since he and his Father were one. The *Jews*, upon this, were going to stone him, because he took upon him the title of the Son of God; but our Lord, not being willing to speak openly to them concerning his divinity, contented himself with telling them, that since the Scripture calls princes and magistrates Gods, he might very well assume the name of the Son of God without blasphemy, forasmuch as God had sent him into the world, and that his miracles plainly proved that he was so. After which our Saviour retired from *Jerusalem*.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS discourse of *Christ*, speaking of himself under the character of a shepherd, is much plainer to us than it was to the *Jews*, since we know perfectly that our Lord is the true shepherd, who gave his life for the sheep, that is to say, for all true believers; and that he came to gather them all together, from *Jews* and *Gentiles* into his church. Upon which we must acknowledge the infinite love of *Christ*, our good shepherd, who so tenderly loved his sheep, and who suffered death, to obtain life and salvation for them; and how great our happiness is, to be of the number of those sheep which he has redeemed by his blood, and for which he has purchased everlasting life. The
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second part of this chapter suggests to us four considerations. I. The first relates to the strange blindness and malice of the *Jews*, who after so many miracles which *Christ* had wrought, and so many proofs that shewed he was sent from God, asked him whether he was the Messiah, and then would have stoned him for a blasphemer. Our Lord himself observes, that this unbelief of the *Jews* proceeded from their not loving the truth, and from their want of a sincere desire to know it. If therefore men do not profit by the doctrine of *Christ Jesus*, and in the midst of light are still in ignorance and error, it proceeds from the want of docility, and love of truth and virtue. II. The second observation is, that the token and character of our Saviour's sheep, that is to say, of his true disciples, is to hearken to the voice of their divine Shepherd, to follow him, and to obey him. III. We see in this discourse of our Lord, that the happiness and salvation of true believers is certain, since he declares, *That he knows them, that he gives unto them eternal life, that they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hands.* These words should fill all those that love the Lord *Jesus* with great comfort, and a firm expectation of that glory and felicity which is prepared for them in his kingdom. IV. Since our Lord says, at the end of this chapter, that he could justly take upon himself the title of the Son of God, this should fully convince us of his divinity, and the excellence of his office, especially as we are elsewhere assured that he is both God and man; which is the strongest motive to believe in him, and to pay him that obedience which is so justly due to him, on account of that authority he has over us, and his love towards us.

CHAP. XI.

THIS chapter contains the history of the resurrection of *Lazarus*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE following are the principal reflections to be made upon this history, which is one of the most remarkable of the whole Gospel: I. That though our Lord had a great kindness for *Lazarus*, yet he did not go to *Bethany* till after he was dead, to the end, that the miracle of restoring him to life, might be much more illustrious than that of curing his distemper. Those whom God loves may be exposed to many evils; he even delays to come to their assistance; but he uses them thus, that his power and love may appear more plainly in their deliverance. II. We may observe, in what the sisters of *Lazarus* said to our Saviour, their piety, love, and adherence to *Christ*, and the great opinion they had of his power. We see, in particular that they were fully persuaded their brother would rise at the last day. We have yet much greater reason than those two holy women to love our Lord, to put our whole trust in him, to expect all things from his power, and, particularly, to believe that the dead shall rise again at the end of the world. III. The kindness with which *Christ* spake to the sisters of *Lazarus*, to comfort them, and to prepare them for the miracle which he designed to do: the concern he shewed, and the tears he shed when he saw *Lazarus* in the tomb, are very plain proofs, how much he loved these two women and their brother, and how charitable he was, and full of compassion. As far as we are affected with the misfortunes of other men, and ready to comfort the miserable, we may be said to have the spirit of *Christ*. But what is chiefly to be observed here, is, that our Lord restored life to *Lazarus*, after he had been four days in the grave. This great miracle, which *Christ* wrought but a few days before his death, and in the presence of a great number of the *Jews*, several of whom believed in him, is one of the most illustrious proofs that he gave, during his whole life, that he was the Son of God. This miracle serves especially to confirm the doctrine of the resurrection
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of the dead, and the truth of what our Lord says in this chapter: *I am the resurrection and the life; He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.* IV. St. John acquaints us, that the Pharisees, instead of being convinced by so illustrious a miracle, were so enraged to see the people declare for *Christ*, that they formed a design of putting him to death, which made him retire to a solitary place till the feast of the passover. Thus the enemies of our Lord grew more and more obstinate, resisted to the very last the evidence of his miracles; and every thing our merciful Redeemer did to soften and prevail upon them, only served to provoke them more against him. God permitted, however, the *Jews* to take the resolution of putting him to death, to the end that, contrary to their design, our Lord might die, not only for the *Jewish* nation, but also to collect into one body all the children of God, and by that means establish his doctrine and kingdom in the world.

CHAP. XII. 1—19.

I. *MARY* anoints our Saviour's feet. II. Several people come to *Bethany* to see *Christ*, and *Lazarus* that was raised. III. Our Lord makes his royal entry into *Jerusalem*.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are three things to be considered in the anointing of our Saviour's feet; the action itself; what judgment *Judas* passed upon this action; and what was said by our Lord in defence of it. As *Mary* anointed him with precious ointment, after the manner of those times, to testify her respect and love for him, we ought likewise to shew him our love and our zeal by all the means that are in our power, and which are most pleasing in his sight. The murmuring of *Judas*, who, being a thief, and a covetous man, complained that the price of that ointment was not given to the poor, proves very clearly, that the heart of this false disciple was

was entirely corrupted. We likewise see by this instance, what power covetousness has over those whom it possesses, and how wicked men do sometimes hide their passions under the veil of religion and piety. And what *Christ* said in behalf of *Mary*, shews, that he vouchsafes to accept whatever is done for his honour, and particularly all acts of charity. II. The resort of many people to *Bethany* to see *Lazarus*, whom our Lord had raised, and the resolution taken by the priests to put *Lazarus* to death as well as *Christ*, is an argument of the truth of this miracle. It likewise shews, that the wickedness of the chief among the *Jews* was at the highest pitch, and that there was no more good to be expected from them. And, III. The acclamations of the people who attended him when he made entry into *Jerusalem*, is another proof of the resurrection of *Lazarus*; since St. *John* takes notice that the multitude bore witness that *Christ* had called *Lazarus* from the grave, and restored him to life. Our Lord was pleased, at that time, to receive the homage which he had before refused, and suffered himself to be publicly acknowledged for the Messiah. He appeared, however, on this occasion, in great simplicity, his attendants being none but the common people, and he himself sitting on an ass, as the prophet *Zechariah* had foretold. All this was done, that none of the marks which the prophets had given of the Messiah might be wanting in him; and to shew that humility and meekness were his character; and that the kingdom he was going to establish was a spiritual and heavenly kingdom. Now, if the disciples of *Jesus Christ*, and the multitude, expressed their joy and gratitude by attending him into *Jerusalem*, we are still more engaged to adore our great Redeemer, and bless God continually for the wonders he has done, and the many proofs he has given us of his power and his love.

CHAP. XII. 20—50.

ST. *John* relates four things: I. What *Christ* said when certain strangers, that were come to *Jerusalem* to keep the feast of the passover, desired to see him. II. That God caused a voice at that time to be heard from heaven; and that upon the same occasion our Lord discoursed concerning his death, and the establishment of his kingdom, but that the *Jews* did not understand his words. III. St. *John* observes, that though our Lord had wrought so many miracles, the *Jews* did not believe in him, and that this their unbelief had been foretold by the prophet *Isaiah*. IV. And lastly, the Evangelist relates some exhortations which *Christ* made to the *Jews* before his death; in which he shews what would happen to those which would receive his doctrine, and to those that should reject it.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE meaning of what our Saviour said, when the strangers desired to see him, was, that he would quickly manifest himself to all men; but, that he was to die first, as wheat must be put into the ground and die, before it can bring forth fruit. Our Lord adds, that it should be with his disciples as with himself; that all those who had a mind to follow him ought to prepare themselves for sufferings and death; but, that he would exalt those that should believe in him and serve him, to the same glory to which he was going to be exalted. The *Jews* did not comprehend this discourse; but it is by no means obscure to us. II. At that time *Jesus*, under the terrors of his approaching death, prayed unto his Father, that he would manifest his glory in a wonderful manner, and shew that he was his Son. Upon which God caused a voice to be heard from heaven, declaring that what he had prayed for should be accomplished. This voice from heaven was heard when our Saviour was going to be crucified, to
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take away the scandal of the cross, and to convince them that he was really the Son of God. Whereupon our Lord declared, that the kingdom of Satan was going to be destroyed, and he should soon draw all men to him, and that this would be one of the effects of his death. The event soon verified the divinity of this prediction. III. *St. John* reflecting, in this chapter, upon the unbelief of the *Jews*, observes, that the greatest part did not believe in *Christ*, and others durst not own that they took him for the Messiah, because they were afraid of the Pharisees, and because they loved the praise of men more than that of God. Thus it is when the Gospel is preached to men; some harden themselves, and reject it; and others, who are in some manner affected with its excellency, dare not make an open profession of truth and holiness, being with-holden by fear, by an unseasonable shame, or by other passions. IV. We ought carefully to attend to what *Christ* said to the *Jews* towards the end of his life, when they were going to be deprived of his presence; namely, that he was come to enlighten them, and to lead them to life; that they should have walked in the light, before the darkness overtook them; and, that those who would not hear his word, should be judged by that same word which they rejected. This declaration is made to all who have the Gospel made known to them, and warns us to make a better use than the *Jews* did of this divine light, which enlightens us, lest the darkness overtake us too; and lest the Gospel, which is preached to us, become one day the cause of our condemnation.

CHAP. XIII.

I. *CHRIST* washes his apostles feet, and exhorts them to humility and charity. II. He declares that *Judas* would deliver him to the *Jews*, and discourses with his disciples about his decease. III. He exhorts them to love one another. IV. He foretels that *Peter* would deny him.

REFLECTIONS.

WHEN the Son of God washed the feet of his apostles, a little before his death, the design of that action, so extraordinary and so surprizing, was to shew how much he loved them, to give them an example of humility, and to teach them, that they ought to love one another, to consider all men as their equals, and to banish from their minds all thoughts of a temporal kingdom and worldly glory. We ought seriously to meditate upon this instance of humility and charity, which is of so great efficacy to render us truly humble, and to excite us to love one another sincerely. If *Jesus Christ*, who is our Master and Lord, has so humbled himself as to wash his disciples feet, which was the business of servants and slaves, there is no office we ought to think too mean, when charity, and the good of our neighbour, is concerned. This is the use we ought to make of this action, as our Lord exhorts us in these words: *I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you; if ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.* II. Our Lord thought fit to declare in the presence of his apostles, that one of them would deliver him to the *Jews*, that when *Judas* should betray him, they might be convinced that it was to happen so, for the accomplishment of the designs of Providence. Howbeit, *Christ* did not name *Judas*, nor discover him to all the apostles, because they should not attempt to hinder the execution of his design. From thence it appears plainly, that our Saviour was not ignorant of any thing that was to befall him; that he knew the purposes of men, and the most secret thoughts of their hearts. He foresees the treachery of *Judas*, but is not the author of it; it was the covetousness of that infidel disciple, which hurried him on to so foul a deed; and he proceeds to put in execution what he had resolved, though *Jesus* had forewarned him that he knew his design. Thus God foresees the sins which men are going to commit, without being the cause of them, he warns them of their

their sin and danger, but when they are obstinate, he leaves them to themselves. III. It is next to be observed that *Christ* being shortly to leave his disciples, recommends to them, above all things, to love one another, which is the great commandment that our Blessed Redeemer has left, and of which he has given us an example, by dying for us; and has most expressly declared, that this should be the token by which his true disciples would be distinguished. Our principal duty therefore is, heartily to love each other, and to live in peace and concord, without which we have no right to bear the glorious name of Christians. IV. *Christ's* foretelling that *Peter* would deny him, is a fresh proof that nothing is hid from our Lord, and that he knows us better than we know ourselves. St. *Peter* did not think himself capable of so great unbelief, and yet he fell that very night. Such an example should teach us all to distrust ourselves, and to be continually upon our guard, humbly acknowledging our weakness.

CHAP. XIV.

THIS chapter, and the two following, contain the discourse that *Christ* had with his disciples the evening before his death. His design in this discourse was to comfort them, to strengthen their faith, and to fill them with courage and zeal, to the end, they might not be offended at his death; and that afterwards they might be in a condition to preach the Gospel, without fearing the hatred of the world.

In this fourteenth chapter, I. *Christ* makes mention to the apostles of the glory to which he was going to be exalted, and to which he would exalt them one day. II. He tells them, that they ought to be convinced by his miracles that God had sent him, and that they themselves should do as great miracles as his. And, III. He exhorts them to keep his commandments; he promises to send them the Holy Ghost, assures them they should see him quickly again, and talks to them of the happiness of those that shall persevere in his

love, and observe his word. IV. He gives them his blessing and his peace, and exhorts them to rejoice at his departure. This discourse being finished, he leaves *Jerusalem*, and goes with his apostles towards the mount of *Olives*.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this and the following chapters, we observe in general the great love *Christ* had for his disciples, and which he bears to all those that love him and believe in him. The duties which this discourse of our Lord engage us to, are, I. To meditate continually upon the glory to which he has exalted in the heavens, and to the enjoyment of which he declares he will likewise receive us: to aspire to the same glory, by following the way that leads to it; and, since he himself is that way that leadeth to life, to adhere inviolably to him. II. The second duty, which is indeed the sum of religion, is, ardently to love our Saviour, and to shew the sincerity of our love by keeping his commandments. III. The promise which *Christ* made of sending his Spirit, after his ascension, did not respect the apostles alone, who by the gift of the Holy Ghost were to have a power of working miracles conferred on them, but had some respect to all the faithful, into whose hearts he does send his spirit of comfort and sanctification. It is our duty, therefore, to implore the guidance and assistance of the Holy Ghost, remembering what *Christ* said, that the world cannot know nor receive that Holy Spirit; and that therefore, if we desire to obtain it, we must purify our hearts from the love of the world. IV. We should consider, that as our Lord promised his disciples to return to them after his resurrection, so he will come to us at the last day: that then his elect shall be filled with comfort and joy; and, that, in expectation of his glorious coming, our chief care ought to be to persevere in his love, and to obey his divine commandments. The last part of this chapter teaches us that *Christ* communicates and unites himself in the most

most intimate manner to all those that love him and keep his word ; that he heaps his favours upon them, and grants them his blessing and his peace. A due reflection upon all these precious advantages, ought to inflame us with love for our gracious Redeemer, and convince us that all our happiness consists in being faithful to him, in loving him, and living in communion with him.

CHAP. XV.

OUR Lord does four things in this chapter. I.

He represents, by the comparison of the vine and the branches, the union between him and his disciples. II. He exhorts them to persevere in this union, and in his love, to keep his commandments, and particularly to love one another. III. He tells them, he had chosen them to preach the Gospel throughout all the earth with wonderful success. IV. He warns them, that they should be exposed to persecution and the hatred of the world ; but, for their encouragement, he represents to them, that he had been exposed to the same hatred, and promises them the assistance of the Holy Ghost, which he would send after he left them.

REFLECTIONS.

THE following reflections may be made upon the four parts of this chapter. I. The first, which contains the similitude of the vine and the branches, denotes the strictness of the union between *Christ* and the faithful ; that all our happiness depends upon this union ; that we must partake of the spirit and life of *Christ*, before we can bring forth fruit to the glory of God, and answerable to the advantage of being his disciples ; and that such as are not united to him by faith, and that bear no fruit, shall be cut off and cast into the fire, like withered branches. II. The second part teaches us, that our great and principal duty is to continue in the love of *Christ*, to keep his commandments, and to love each other ; continually setting be-

fore us, for this purpose, the example of his great love to us, which engaged him to lay down his life for us.

III. *Christ's* telling his apostles, that he had chosen them to establish his kingdom throughout the world, is a very clear proof of the divinity of the Gospel, since the preaching of the apostles was attended with the conversion of so many nations; but we ought likewise to consider, that our Lord has chosen and called us all, that we may bring forth fruit unto holiness, and that each of us may labour with all his might to promote his kingdom, and the knowledge of him. IV. The last part of this chapter instructs us in two things: The one is, that the world usually hates those that love *Christ*, and that lead a godly life; but we must not think that strange, since our Lord himself has likewise been exposed to the same hatred. The other, that since *Christ* has spoken, and the Gospel has been preached to men, those who continue in infidelity and in corruption are without excuse, because they reject the testimony of the Son of God, of the Holy Spirit, and of the apostles, and wilfully shut their eyes against the truth.

CHAP. XVI.

I. *CHRIST* continues to warn the apostles, that they ought to prepare themselves to be persecuted, and even to suffer death. II. To alleviate their sorrow at his departure, he promises them the Holy Ghost; and tells them, that that Holy Spirit would condemn the unbelieving world, and enable them more perfectly to know the truths which he had taught them, and to declare them to mankind. III. He adds, that he was to leave them for a little time, but that they would soon see him again, when he should rise from the dead; that then they would be filled with joy; that he would bestow on them new favours, and procure for them the most precious gifts. IV. This discourse of *Christ* served to comfort the apostles, and to strengthen their faith.

REFLECTIONS.

LET us learn from this chapter, I. That as the apostles were to be exposed to great persecutions, so likewise true believers must expect to feel the effects of the hatred of those who neither know nor love the Lord *Jesus*. II. That it was necessary for our happiness that *Christ* should leave the world, that he might enter into his glory, and send us the Holy Ghost, and establish his kingdom. III. What *Christ* says of the Holy Spirit, that *when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment*; signifies, that the coming of the Holy Ghost, and the preaching of the apostles, would serve to convict the *Jews* of their wilful and inexcusable unbelief; to prove that *Jesus* was the Son of God; and to destroy the kingdom of the devil. This is what actually happened; whereby we plainly see, that the doctrine of our Lord proceeds from God. IV. The excellent promises which *Christ* made the apostles, of filling them abundantly with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, have likewise been accomplished, and the effects thereof appeared in the wonderful success of their preaching. V. We may observe, that the apostles did not understand what our Saviour meant, when he told them, that in a little while they should not see him; and again, in a little while they should see him; and that he was going to his Father, and that then they should be entirely comforted; but these words, as well as the foregoing, were perfectly explained by his resurrection, by his ascension, and by their glorious consequences. These promises, which confirmed the faith of the apostles; ought also to strengthen ours and induce us to believe, that although *Jesus Christ* be at present absent from us, he will not be so always; that, if we persevere in his love, he will procure for us from God the most valuable favours; and that, as he returned to his apostles after his resurrection, he will likewise return to us at his second and last coming, to bring us into the glory of his kingdom,

CHAP.

CHAP. XVII.

THIS chapter contains the prayer which *Christ* offered to God his Father before he suffered death, which consists of three articles: I. He prays for himself, and desires to be received into heavenly glory, that God may be glorified thereby. II. He prays for the apostles, whom he was going to leave, and begs of his Father to protect them, and to sanctify them, to the end that they may persevere in the faith, and be enabled to preach the Gospel throughout the world, without fearing persecutions. III. He prays for all those that should believe in him, and that should receive the preaching of the apostles; and he desires of God, that the apostles, and all the faithful, may be always united to him, and to one another, by faith, and by charity; and that they might also be admitted to that glory into which he was to enter, and remain for ever with him.

REFLECTIONS.

IN the former part of this excellent prayer, which our Lord made when he was just going to offer himself as a sacrifice upon the cross, there are two things to be considered: First, That the Christian Religion consists in knowing the one only true God, and *Jesus Christ* whom he has sent; that this is the only way to obtain eternal life; and therefore, that faith in God and *Christ* is absolutely necessary to salvation. We observe further, our Lord's great zeal for the glory of God, and the glorious reward he expected after his sufferings. By this example of our Saviour, we should learn to be animated with the same zeal, and to glorify God upon earth as much as we are able, that we may be admitted into that glory, which he has prepared for his elect before the foundation of the world. II. We see in this prayer, the great love that *Christ* bore to his disciples, and with how much warmth and tenderness he recommended them to the protection of
God

God his Father before he left them. The event made it appear that the prayers of our Lord was heard, since, except *Judas*, whose infidelity he had foretold, all the apostles persevered in the truth which they had embraced, and the zeal they exerted had so wonderful success in the conversion of men. III. But what we ought above all to observe here, and what chiefly concerns us, is, that our Lord did not only pray for the apostles, but for all such as should believe in him, and that should receive their preaching. Hence we see, how dear the faithful are to *Christ*, the care he takes of them, and the desire he has to render them partakers of that glory which he now enjoys. This ought to fill all those who truly love the Lord *Jesus*, with firm confidence and unpeakable joy. But it must be carefully observed, that *Christ* only prays thus for true believers; and that he himself declared, that he did not pray for the men of this world, for unbelievers. If therefore, we desire to be of the number of those for whom *Christ* makes this prayer, and for whom he intercedes in heaven, we must separate ourselves from the world, we must be joined to *Christ* by a true faith, and to our neighbours by a sincere love, and persevere in the communion of God our Father, and of *Jesus Christ* our Saviour, to the end of our lives.

CHAP. XVIII.

- I. *CHRIST* is taken in the garden. II. He is afterwards carried before the council of the *Jews*. III. And next before *Pilate*, who refused at first to condemn him. IV. We find here likewise *St. Peter's* denial.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter there are four principal things to be considered: I. That our Lord caused those that came to apprehend him to fall down to the earth by one word only. *St. John* takes notice, that *Christ* gave

gave this mark of his power, to secure his apostles from being hurt by those who came to seize him; and to shew them that he could, if he had pleased, escape death. II. The second reflection relates to the behaviour of St. *Peter*, who drew his sword in the defence of his master, and a little while after denied him. This action shews that this apostle had zeal, but his zeal was not according to knowledge, nor without great mixture of weakness. This action furnishes us with two instructions; one is, that if *Christ* blamed what this apostle did, upon an occasion that seemed lawful, it being to resist those that would unjustly have taken away his Master's life; all actions of violence and revenge are unlawful, and there is nothing that can authorize them; and that patience and meekness is the character of *Christ's* disciples. The other is, that those who abound in zeal and good intentions, may greatly fall, when they presume too much upon themselves, and do not guard against temptations by watching and prayer; which was St. *Peter's* case. III. In the manner in which they proceeded against our Lord, when he was brought before the council of the *Jews*, it plainly appears that he was innocent, and that the *Jews* only sought for a pretence to condemn him; but, it is to be observed, that our Lord submitted to their judgment, though it was unjust, and to their outrages, exerting on that occasion, wonderful patience and meekness. This is a noble lesson to us of patience and resignation, and we ought to conform ourselves to it. IV. It is to be observed, in the last place, that when *Jesus* was sent before *Pilate*, that governor would not condemn him at first; and that having asked our Lord, whether he was the king of the *Jews*, he answered he was so, but that his kingdom was not of this world. These circumstances serve to shew the innocence of *Christ*; and the confession he made in the presence of *Pilate*, teaches us that we must always make a free confession of the truth, though we were sure thereby to draw upon ourselves the hatred of the world; imitating the example of
our

our Saviour, who, as *St. Paul* takes notice, *before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession*, and said, *he came into the world to bear witness unto the truth*; though this confession was to be the cause both of his condemnation and death.

CHAP. XIX. 1—26.

PILATE causes our Lord to be scourged, and makes the soldiers treat him with indignity and contempt, thinking thereby to pacify the priests and the chief of the *Jews*. He declares to them, he found him innocent, and endeavours to save his life; but they insisting upon his being put to death, he consents, at last, that he should be crucified.

REFLECTIONS.

IN the history of the condemnation of *Christ*, we are to consider the behaviour of *Pilate*, that of the *Jews*, and our Lord's behaviour: I. In the behaviour of *Pilate*, we see the character of an unjust judge; since that governor, believing *Christ* to be innocent, caused him to be scourged and treated with great contempt. He thought by this to content the *Jews*, and prevail upon them not to insist upon his being crucified. But the *Jews*, seeing *Pilate's* irresolution, and the regard he had for them, pressed him still more; and thus *Pilate*, after having already committed one unjust action, by scourging our Saviour, engaged himself in the guilt of a much more crying one, by condemning him to be put to death. Condescending to the desires of wicked men, makes them more bold and enterprising; and, when men have once begun to do wickedly, they always go farther and farther; one sin leads them on to still greater, till at last they proceed to the highest crimes. All this shews how dangerous it is to act against light, and the conviction of our conscience; to shew a complaisance for the wicked

wicked in evil things; and to seek for evasions and expedients when we are to do our duty, and to resist temptation. II. The behaviour of the *Jews*, who could not be appeased either by the remonstrances of *Pilate*, or by what *Christ* had suffered, and who continued to require that he should be crucified, shews, that when men abandon themselves to their passions, and when they have once taken their resolution, be it never so bad, they will give ear to nothing, but engage themselves deeper and deeper in it, till at last they compass their designs. III. The behaviour of *Christ*, the great patience, moderation, and meekness with which he submitted to all the cruel and unrighteous treatment of *Pilate*, and the *Jews*, ought to make a deep impression upon us. This is a token of his great love, and an example of great weight, to make us patient, meek, moderate, and submissive to the will of God, under all the evils that may befall us, even though we should suffer through the malice and wickedness of men.

CHAP. XIX. 17—42.

ST. *John* gives us here an account of the crucifixion, death, and burial of our Lord.

REFLECTIONS.

THE history of the passion and death of our Saviour, is to be considered principally in these three views: I. As a sacrifice which he offered to God for the expiation of our sins, to deliver us from death, and procure us a title to everlasting life. II. As an engagement to love this gracious Redeemer, who has so loved us; and to renounce sin, which he came to destroy by his death. III. As an example of patience and humiliation, which we ought continually to set before our eyes. Besides these general considerations, we may make the four following particular reflections upon

upon the circumstances of this history. I. That the writing which was put upon the cross in three languages, made known to all the world the cause of *Christ's* condemnation, and, consequently, his innocence. II. That the several circumstances of his passion, and of his death, such as the dividing his garments, his thirsting, his bones not being broken, and the piercing his side, had been foretold in the prophecies of the Old Testament. For which reason, the *Jews* ought to have observed, by all that then happened, that *Jesus* was the Messiah promised by the prophets; and it is what we ought to be fully persuaded of by the wonderful agreement between the predictions of the Old Testament, and their accomplishment in the New, in the person of our Saviour. III. What *Christ* said upon the cross, to recommend the Blessed Virgin to St. *John*, shews the tender care our Lord took of his mother, and at the same time, his love to that apostle. IV. In the relation of the burial of our Saviour, the courage and boldness of *Joseph* is very remarkable; who, though he had been just condemned and put to death, was not afraid to express his respect for him; the same is very remarkable in *Nicodemus*, who had before been so timorous. The circumstances of his burial serve also to prove the truth of his death and resurrection. Lastly, When we reflect upon the burial of our Lord, it should teach us not to fear either the grave or death, knowing, if we die as he did, we shall also rise as he did.

CHAP. XX.

I. *CHRIST* being risen from the dead, appears first to *Mary Magdalen*. II. Next to the apostles, in the absence of *Thomas*. III. And after that, to *Thomas* himself.

REFLECTIONS.

WE see in this chapter, how *Christ* shewed himself after his resurrection, first, to *Mary Magdalen*, and then to all the apostles. *Mary Magdalen* was first informed of our Lord's resurrection by an apparition of angels, and she was the first who had the happiness of seeing him after he was risen. This was a reward for her piety and love to *Christ*; and thus does God make himself known to those who love him, and sincerely seek him. It appears from the account of *St. John*, that the apostles did not, at first, believe the resurrection of our Lord, and that they were not fully convinced, till he had given them certain and repeated proofs of it. This we see particularly in the example of *St. Thomas*, who would not believe that *Christ* was risen, until he had both seen him, and touched his hands, his feet, and his side; but, after he had thus satisfied himself of the truth, which he at first refused to believe, he worshipped him as his Saviour and his God. Our Lord's appearing at several different times, serves to prove that he is really risen from the dead, and to confirm the testimony which the apostles bore to this truth. *Christ* being thus raised, we can no longer doubt that he was the Son of God, and that he has made a perfect atonement for our sins by his death. His resurrection is an image, and an undoubted pledge of our own: and therefore ought mightily to strengthen our faith and hope, and fill us with exceeding joy. Let faith in *Christ* risen purify and sanctify our hearts; and let us, after the example of *Mary* and the apostles, who were so exceedingly rejoiced to see their Master risen, and who shewed so much zeal and love for him, worship him as our Lord and our God. So that, expressing the sincerity of our faith by our obedience, we may attain that happiness, which he has promised to all those who truly believe in him.

CHAP. XXI.

I. *JESUS* appears to the apostles near the sea of *Tiberias*, and gives them proofs of his resurrection. II. He confirms *St. Peter* in his apostleship, and foretels what was to happen to that apostle, and to *St. John*, which finishes this Gospel.

REFLECTIONS.

I. We see in this chapter, first, that our Lord was pleased to assure his apostles of his resurrection, not only by shewing himself to them, and by eating in their presence, but by giving them marks of his divine power. This ought to convince us more and more of that great truth upon which all our comfort depends. II. *Jesus Christ*, before he reinstated *St. Peter* in his apostleship, asked him three times whether he loved him. Our Lord obliged him to make these three declarations, that this apostle might be more sensible of the sin he had committed in denying him three times, and repair the scandal he had thereby given. This teaches us, that *Christ* pardons none but such as confess their sins, that repair them as well as they are able, and forsake them, and return to their duty. But what he chiefly requires of us, is, to love him with all our heart, so as to be able to say with *St. Peter*, *Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee*; otherwise, we deserve not to be called his disciples. III. It may be further observed, that, when *St. Peter* had made this declaration, *Christ* re-established him in his apostleship, saying to him, *Feed my sheep*. He even foretold that he should undergo martyrdom, which shewed, that the fidelity of this apostle should thenceforwards be proof against all temptations. Thus God pardons all those that truly repent; and thus he grants them new supplies of grace: wherefore, those whom God has thus pardoned, ought zealously and inviolably to adhere to his service all the rest of their lives.

lives. We see, lastly, that our Lord foretels, that St. *John* should *tarry* till he came. This signified, that this apostle should live till he had seen the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the ruin of the *Jews*. It was a privilege *Christ* thought fit to grant to this disciple, whom he loved: And this promise was fulfilled, St. *John* having lived to a great age, and long after all the other apostles, and about thirty years after the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and seen, before his death, the completion of all that he had heard his Lord foretel concerning this destruction, and the establishment of his kingdom.

The end of the Gospel according to St. JOHN.

THE
ACTS
OF THE
APOSTLES.

ARGUMENT.

St. Luke relates, in this Book, how the Christian Religion prevailed, and was established, after the ascension of our Saviour; first at Jerusalem, and afterwards in several other places, by the preaching of the Apostles, and chiefly by the ministry of St. Peter and St. Paul. This history contains that period of time which passed between the ascension of Christ, and the first imprisonment of St. Paul at Rome, making the space of about twenty-eight years.

CHAP. I.

IN the first chapter St. Luke relates two things:
I. The ascension of our Lord. II. The choice of St. Matthias to the office of an apostle.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

THE first part of this chapter teaches us, that our Lord being risen, continued forty days upon earth, that he might the more fully convince the apostles of the truth of his resurrection; and to give them necessary instructions. At the end of these forty days, he was carried up into heaven in their presence, because they were to be witnesses of this great event; and angels appeared to them, assuring them, that *Jesus* was ascended into heaven, and that he would come from thence at the last day. This furnishes us with the most convincing proofs of the resurrection of our Lord, of his ascension, and of the certainty of his last coming; these truths being attested by the apostles, by the angels, as well as by the wonderful effects that followed his exaltation to the heavenly glory. His ascension ought to convince us, that he has a sovereign authority over all things, and that his kingdom is spiritual and heavenly. It should likewise engage us continually to raise our thoughts and our desires towards that glorious mansion where our Lord is exalted at the right hand of his Father, and where he also prepares for us an everlasting habitation; and to live in a constant practice of holiness, in an expectation of his coming again. In the second part of this chapter, there are two things principally to be observed: One, that religious assemblies are authorised by the example of the apostles, and the first disciples of *Christ*; who, after his ascension to heaven, did commonly meet together to pray. The other is, that our Lord had chosen twelve apostles, the first care of *St. Peter* and his colleagues was, to appoint an apostle in the place of *Judas*, that for this purpose, they made choice of two persons, who had been witnesses of the life and resurrection of our Saviour; but that they cast lots, and prayed the Lord to shew which of the two he had chosen, because the apostles were to be chosen immediately by *Christ* himself.

CHAP. II.

ST. *Luke* relates four things in this chapter, I. How the apostles received the Holy Ghost upon the day of pentecost. II. St. *Peter's* discourse to the *Jews* on that day. III. The effect of this discourse, which was the conversion of three thousand persons. IV. The condition the church of *Jerusalem* was in at that time.

REFLECTIONS.

ON this chapter we must observe, I. That *Christ*, by the descent of the Holy Ghost on the apostles, fulfilled the promises he had made them of sending a comforter to them after his departure, and gave them plain and undoubted proofs of his exaltation to heaven. He bestowed on them the gift of speaking all kinds of languages, to shew they were to preach the Gospel to all the nations of the earth, and to put them in a capacity of doing it. This miracle happened on a solemn day, and in the presence of a great multitude of people, who were come to *Jerusalem* from several parts of the world, that the fame thereof might spread on all sides, and dispose men to receive the preaching of the apostles. II. The end and design of the discourse which St. *Peter* made that day, was to teach the *Jews*, that what happened then was foretold by the prophet *Joel*: that that *Jesus*, whom they had crucified, was risen again: that God had exalted him to heaven: that it was he who had given his apostles the gift of tongues; and, that all mankind ought to look upon him as the Messiah, and as their Lord and King. This is also the sum of the Gospel, and what we ought to believe concerning *Jesus Christ*. III. The conversion of those three thousand *Jews*, who were baptised on that day, was a surprising proof of the efficacy of St. *Peter's* preaching; and their example shews, that a hearty sorrow for sin, and an humble, teachable disposition, prepare the sinner to obey the divine will, and is the character of true penitents, the

sure way to amend their lives, and put them into the way of salvation. Lastly, What St. *Luke* tells us in this chapter, of the piety of those first Christians, of their constant attendance upon prayer and the holy Eucharist, and other religious exercises; of the admirable union there was among them; of their charity; and, in general, of the innocency of their lives and manners, deserves our most serious attention. In all these respects those first Christians, which composed the church at *Jerusalem*, are a pattern to all churches, and to Christians of all times, to be zealous and constant in prayer, and all the parts of divine service, to live in peace and concord, to practise works of charity, and to become acceptable to God and man, by purity of manners, and by holiness of life.

CHAP. III.

THIS chapter contains. I. The account of a miracle done by St. *Peter* in healing a cripple. And, II. What this apostle said to the *Jews*, to convince them that the said miracle was wrought in the name of *Jesus Christ*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE curing this lame man shews us, that presently after the ascension of our Lord, the apostles proved before all the *Jews*, by illustrious miracles, that *Christ* was ascended to heaven, and that he had given them power to work miracles like those which he himself wrought. By this means the Gospel continued to make great progress in *Jerusalem*, all the people being astonished at this miraculous cure. II. We observe in the discourse of St. *Peter*, the zeal and boldness with which the apostle reproached the *Jews* for the crime they had committed in crucifying the Lord; and how he loudly declared, that this *Jesus* was the Messiah, whose coming all the prophets had foretold. Thus we ought always to confess the name of our Lord and Saviour, and bear an authentic testimony to the truth.

III.

III. We see here, moreover, that though the *Jews* had crucified the Son of God, St. *Peter* exhorts them to repentance, and promises them, that their sins should be blotted out, provided they would be converted, and not obstinately persist in their unbelief. Whence we may infer, that the grace of God is freely offered to all those who repent and amend, how wicked soever they have been. IV. And lastly, St. *Peter* informs us, that *Christ* is that great prophet of whom *Moses* spake, and of whom God said, that we ought to hear whatever he shall say; and that those who refuse to hear him, shall be cut off from his people. This is what St. *Peter* takes notice of in the last verse of this chapter, saying, God has sent his Son *Jesus* to bless us, by turning every one of us from our iniquities. The Son of God, then, was sent to turn men from their iniquities; and, therefore, without this, we can have no share in the blessings procured for us by our great Redeemer.

CHAP. IV.

ST. *Luke* relates, I. The imprisonment of the apostles St. *Peter* and St. *John*. II. Their appearing before the council of the *Jews*, and what happened there. III. A prayer which they made to God, after they were strictly charged to speak no more in the name of *Christ Jesus*. IV. The state of the church of *Jerusalem*; and, above all, the wonderful love and charity that reigned there.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we see, I. The accomplishment of what our Saviour had told the apostles, namely, that they should be cast into prison, and brought before magistrates for his sake; but it is likewise to be observed, that the severe treatment they met with did not shake their constancy; and that the number of Christians increased daily, notwithstanding the opposition of the *Jews*. II. St. *Luke* informs us, that the

apostles appearing before the council, spake there with a holy boldness, and with such evidence, that their enemies were amazed at it, and had nothing to charge them with. This was an effect of that divine power with which the apostles were endowed, and of the promises *Christ* had made them to assist them, and give them such wisdom as could not be resisted. III. The zeal which the apostles shewed upon the magistrates forbidding them to preach any longer the Gospel, and their answer, that it was not fit to obey man rather than God, is an example, which shews that nothing should hinder us from obeying God; and, in particular, that the ministers of the Gospel, who, through fear of men, or any worldly motive, are afraid to say or do what God commands, are cowards and prevaricators. IV. The fervent prayer which the apostles offered up to God, to implore his assistance, shews the courage and confidence with which they were animated. And the tokens God gave them of his presence and favour, by shaking the place where they were assembled, was a confirmation to them that God heard and accepted their prayer, and that he would always protect them. Those who fear God and seek his glory, are sure to find a powerful assistance and relief in prayer. God never fails to hear those who thus call upon him; and, when we defend his cause, we ought not to fear the vain efforts of men. V. What is said at the end of this chapter, about the union and agreement among the believers at *Jerusalem*, and of the use they made of their goods, shews, that the spirit of Christianity is a spirit of peace and concord, that true Christians have but one heart and one soul, and that they willingly and freely exercise charity toward the necessitous.

CHAP. V.

I. **ST. Luke** gives an account of the sin of *Ananias* and *Sapphira*, and the punishment God inflicted on them. II. He makes mention next of the miracles
of

of the apostles, and the wonderful progress of the Gospel at *Jerusalem*. III. The apostles are imprisoned a second time, but God delivers them by an angel, and they continue to preach the Gospel. IV. They are brought again before the council, which condemns them to be whipped, and forbids them to preach any longer the doctrine of *Christ*.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are three reflections to be made upon the history of *Ananias*: I. God struck that man and his wife dead for having lied to St. *Peter*, that their example might keep in awe all the members of the church, and support the authority of the apostles in the beginning of the preaching of the Gospel, and to shew the divinity of the doctrine they preached. II. This event teaches us, that God knows mens hearts, and the most hidden things; and that though men may be deceived, yet he cannot; and that those who lie to men, and particularly to their spiritual guides, do lie to God, and expose themselves to his vengeance. III. It appears from hence, that it is a great sin to make use of falsehood and deceit in the exercise of charity; that it is in our own power to give, or withhold our hand; but, when we once have devoted a thing to God, and to religious uses, we are not allowed to take it back, nor even to retain the smallest part of it. IV. We must particularly observe what is said in this chapter concerning the surprising miracles wrought by the apostles, and the prodigious increase of the church of *Jerusalem*, as also the love and reverence that every one had for the Christians: these are authentic proofs of the divinity of the Christian doctrine, and its efficacy. And since this progress of the Gospel was the fruit, not only of the miracles of the apostles, but likewise of the union that reigned among the faithful, and of the innocency of their manners, we may learn from hence, how effectual the good lives of Christians are, to render the religion of *Christ* venerable,

able, and to establish it in the world. The apostles were a second time imprisoned, but God, in a miraculous manner, caused the gates of the prison to be opened by an angel. This was a fresh proof of the divine protection, which must needs have filled them with joy and confidence, and ought to have convinced their enemies, that it was in vain to oppose the preaching of the Gospel. We see that the apostles, coming out of the prison, went immediately to teach in the temple, notwithstanding the charge they had received; and, that being summoned for it before the council, they spoke there with great wisdom and boldness, declaring, that they were obliged to obey God rather than men. This instance of courage and zeal in the apostles, is a lesson to us always to follow the dictates of our conscience, without being afraid of the threatenings of men: and that neither the orders nor interdicts of magistrates should ever hinder us from obeying God, and doing what he commands us. Observe further. That the council being enraged against the apostles, would have put them to death, but God made use of the prudent advice of *Gamaliel*, to deliver them from the danger that threatened them. The manner in which this wise senator addressed the council, shews, that pious and moderate advice ought to be followed; that we ought never to do any thing through passion and rash zeal, especially in matters of religion: that the designs of which God is not the author, are sooner or later defeated of themselves; but that those which proceed from him are infallibly fulfilled in spite of the opposition of men; and that those who withstand them fight against God. The last reflection is, that as the apostles, having been condemned to be whipped, rejoiced that they had the honour to suffer such a disgrace for the sake of *Christ*, and continued to preach the Gospel; thus ought we constantly, and with joy, to bear the evils which our duty may expose us to, and persevere in it.

CHAP. VI.

THIS chapter contains two parts. I. In the first we read of the appointment of the order of deacons, whose office it was to distribute the alms of the church. And, in the second, the accusation against St. *Stephen* before the council of the *Jews*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WE have here an account of the institution of deacons, who were appointed by the apostles to distribute the alms of the faithful. Though this office be at this time abolished in most Christian churches, through the fault of men, and the disorder that has crept into it in several respects, it is nevertheless a divine institution, and very useful for the edification of the church. II. Since God thought fit that the distribution of alms should be committed to prudent persons, and such as were filled with the Holy Ghost; it appears that charity is a most important duty, that the alms of the faithful ought to be distributed with great prudence and wisdom, and that it should be done by men of integrity, and that fear God, and that they should be appointed by the church; and, in general, none should be put into ecclesiastical offices, but persons that have a good testimony, and that are of known piety and probity. III. St. *Stephen*, one of the seven deacons, a man remarkable for his faith and zeal, and the miracles he wrought, was not long before he felt the hatred of the *Jews*. He was accused of being an enemy to God and the law of *Moses*, and brought before the council to be condemned; but he appeared before them with a holy boldness, and in such a manner as surprised his very judges. Good men have in all ages been exposed to the hatred and calumnies of the wicked; but their injustice and violence towards them, does not hinder them from discharging their duty with courage, nor from fulfilling the obligations of their calling and of their conscience,

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

THIS chapter contains, I. The discourse St. *Stephen* made before the council of the *Jews*: And, II. The relation of his martyrdom and death.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE design of St. *Stephen's* discourse before the council, was to prove, that he was neither an enemy to God nor the law, as he was accused to be; but that he worshipped the God of *Abraham*, and of the patriarchs. II. That *Christ* was the Messiah that was to be born of the posterity of *Abraham*, and whose coming *Moses* and the prophets had foretold. III. That the covenant of God, and his service, were not confined to the nation of the *Jews*, nor to the temple of *Jerusalem*, nor to the ceremonial worship which *Moses* had prescribed. IV. That the *Jews* had at all times been rebellious against God; that they had rejected and persecuted the prophets; and that therefore it was not strange that they should reject *Christ*, and persecute his servants. We observe in this discourse of St. *Stephen*, his great zeal, and the holy liberty which he took in reproaching the *Jews* for the hardness of their hearts, though he knew very well, in speaking thus, he exposed himself to their rage, and to the danger of losing his life. The *Jews* were so enraged, that they condemned him to be stoned; but God, for his encouragement, having caused him to see heaven open, and *Jesus Christ* sitting on his right hand, he endured with constancy that cruel death, calling upon the Lord with his last breath, and praying for those who put him to death. This death of the first martyr of the church, should teach us to undergo with courage all the evils which the profession of the truth may bring upon us, and even death itself, if we be called to it; to pardon those that do us the greatest harm, and to pray for them. This example is a further proof how sweet the death of true believers is, and with what comfort it is attained;

attended; which should greatly encourage us to godliness, that at our last hour we may likewise commit our souls into the hands of the Lord *Jesus*, and sleep in peace, in expectation of the blessed resurrection.

CHAP. VIII.

ST. *Luke* relates here, I. The persecution that was raised against the church of *Jerusalem* after the death of St. *Stephen*. And, II. How St. *Philip* preached the Gospel at *Samaria*. III. The history of the conversion of a stranger, a great man, who was treasurer of *Candace*, queen of *Ethiopia*.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WE find that the death of St. *Stephen*, and the persecution that was raised against the church of *Jerusalem*, turned to the advancement of the Gospel, since the believers, who were thereupon dispersed, preached the word of God in several places. Thus the persecutions which the first enemies of the church raised against it, contributed towards its increase, and to the spreading the religion of *Christ* more and more.

II. What is said of the credit which the people of *Samaria* gave to *Simon* the magician, shews, that they who know not the truth, are easily seduced by impostors, but the change that happened in that city, after St. *Philip* had preached the Gospel there, shews, that truth will triumph over error and falsehood. St. *Luke* observes, that *Simon* himself desired to be baptised, being surprised at the miracles wrought by St. *Philip*, which proves, that the wicked are sometimes affected with the excellency of the Gospel, so far as even to embrace the profession of it; but not acting upon good principles, their conversion is not sincere. It is added, that *Simon* offered money to St. *Peter*, to obtain the power of communicating the Holy Ghost, and of working miracles; and that St. *Peter* being filled with indignation, denounced the judgment of God against him; upon which we must observe, that

it

it is a detestable impiety to make religion subservient to covetousness and ambition, and to pretend to buy or sell holy things, after what manner soever. Nevertheless, *St. Peter* exhorted *Simon* to repent, and even that wicked man, frightened with that heavy denunciation, intreated the apostles to intercede for him. This teaches us, that we ought never wholly to abandon the greatest sinners, nor refuse them the assistance of our exhortations and prayers. III. God at that time called an officer of queen *Candace* to the Christian Faith, to shew that the Gospel would be soon preached to all nations; and, by means of this man, to spread the true religion throughout *Ethiopia*. This great man, who was one of the Gentile proselytes, who renounced idolatry, was come to worship God at *Jerusalem*, and was employed in reading the Scriptures, when God sent *Philip* to instruct him. We may learn from hence, that Providence takes a particular care of those who have good intentions; and that God grants greater measures of his grace to those that make a right use of what they have already received, and seek the truth in sincerity. The desire which the eunuch expressed, to understand a passage of *Isaiah* that he was reading, and the docility with which he hearkened to *Philip*, shews, that every one must labour to be instructed in the truths of salvation, as well by himself as by the assistance of others; and that we ought not to neglect the instructions of such ministers as God has appointed. The eunuch, after having heard *Philip*, desired to be baptized; and, after he had made an open profession of his faith, was baptized. Those who love truth, as soon as it is made known to them, ought to embrace the profession of it, and never delay the discharge of their duty. Lastly, As this eunuch, after he was baptized, returned with joy unto his own country, we ought also highly to esteem the happiness we enjoy in being called to faith in *Christ*; and the advantage of being made members of his church, should be all our comfort, and all our joy.

CHAP. IX. 1—22.

THIS is the history of the conversion of St. *Paul*.

REFLECTIONS.

WE ought most carefully to attend to this history, and consider, I. That St. *Paul*, who was so excellent an apostle, was, before his conversion, while he was still a *Jew*, a declared enemy of the Christian Religion, and a severe persecutor of the Christians. This apostle tells us himself, that God called him in that condition, that he might make him an illustrious example of his mercy towards sinners. Nevertheless, it must be remembered, that if *Saul* persecuted the church, it was through ignorance and a false zeal, whilst he even thought that he did what was pleasing to God; as for the rest of his life, it was unblameable. When men sin not through malice and obstinacy, but through ignorance and the force of prejudice, they are more susceptible of God's mercy, and more easily recovered from that state. II. The means which the Lord made use of for *Saul's* conversion, are very remarkable. When he was going to *Damascus* to persecute the Christians, *Christ* stopped him near that city, by an apparition that filled him with terror; he spoke to him from heaven, and struck him with blindness. Our Lord proceeded in this manner, because the disposition and temper of *Saul* was such as made it necessary to use very violent methods to cure him of his prejudices, and to render him tractable. Thus God, in his goodness and wisdom, makes use of the most proper means to bring back sinners from their errors. III. These words, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* shew, that *Christ* looks upon that which is done against his members, and against his church, as done against himself; and *Saul's* answer, *Lord, what wouldest thou have me to do?* expresses the humility and docility of sinners who are truly sensible of their sins. When God calls them they obey,

obey, and give up themselves intirely to him, and follow his commands. IV. It must be considered, that as soon as God had prepared *Saul* to hearken to him, and to receive what should be told him, he sent him to *Ananias* to be informed by him what he was to do, and that in the mean time, he prepared *Ananias*, by a vision, to go and visit *Saul* and instruct him; thus God disposed matters with great wisdom to finish the work of *Saul's* conversion. V. Lastly, *Saul*, after fasting and praying three days, recovered his sight, and was instructed and baptized by *Ananias*; and presently after began to preach the Gospel in the synagogues of the *Jews*. We ought to admire the power and goodness of God in this event, so happy for *St. Paul*, and so beneficial to the whole church; and this great and sudden change which was wrought in this apostle, shews, that such as are sincerely converted, do intirely alter their opinion and behaviour, giving open and certain proofs of the sincerity of their conversion.

CHAP. IX. 23—43.

I. *St. Paul*, after his conversion, being persecuted by the *Jews* at *Damascus*, went to *Jerusalem*, from whence he was driven by a fresh persecution, and forced to fly to *Cesarea*, and from thence to *Tarsus*. II. *St. Luke* describes the happy condition of the churches of *Judea*, and of the neighbouring parts. And, III. The miracle of the healing of *Eneas*, and the raising of *Tabitha* from the dead.

REFLECTIONS.

FROM this portion of Scripture we may gather, I. That as soon as *St. Paul* was converted, and began to preach the Gospel, he was persecuted by the *Jews*. God thought fit, by that means, to try the fidelity of this apostle, and to teach him to suffer for *Jesus Christ*. Thus it generally happens to those who are resolved to follow *Christ*, and lead a godly life; they are exposed to

to the hatred of the world, and to many trials, but none of these things surprise them ; they persevere in their duty in spite of opposition, as *Saul*, in spite of the rage of the *Jews*, continued to preach the Gospel, even in the city of *Jerusalem*. II. What *St. Luke* says of the happy state of the churches of *Judea*, *Galilee*, and *Samaria*, suggests two reflections ; one, that if God permits the church to be persecuted, he likewise gives it some relaxation ; the other, that churches are happy and flourishing when they walk in the fear of the Lord, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost are multiplied in them. III. The two miracles related at the end of this chapter, prove, that the apostles wrought the same miracles as our Lord had done whilst he was upon earth, which contributed to the conversion of a great number of people. We have particularly, in the history of *Tabitha*, a noble example of piety and works of charity for all Christians, and especially those of her own sex ; and the raising to life this holy woman, may be looked on as a reward that God was pleased to grant to her piety and faith, and as a proof that should confirm us in the belief of the resurrection, and the hope of a better life.

CHAP. X.

THIS chapter contains an account of the conversion of *Cornelius* the centurion to the Christian Religion. This man was a pagan by birth, but worshipped the true God.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THIS history is recorded to shew us how the Gospel began first to be preached to the Gentiles. We should admire the method which Providence made use of for converting *Cornelius*. God sent an angel to him, to direct him to send for *St. Peter*, and prepared that apostle to go to *Cornelius* ; which he would not have done, if God had not revealed it to him, that he ought to look upon no man as unclean, and that

that the Gospel was to be declared to the Gentiles as well as *Jews*. To this alluded the vision of the vessel, in which were creatures, that the *Jews*, by their law, were forbid to eat of. II. Besides this general consideration, it may be observed, that *Cornelius*, though engaged in the profession of arms, was nevertheless a devout and charitable man, and one that feared God; for which reason God sent an angel, to assure him his prayers and alms were had in remembrance, and brought him to the knowledge of *Christ* by the ministry of *St. Peter*. We may learn from hence, how acceptable to God works of piety and charity are, and that he bestows greater light, and more grace on those who have an upright heart, and call upon him, and fear him. III. *St. Peter's* discourse to *Cornelius* and his friends, comprehends the substance of the doctrine which the apostles preached, that God had sent his Son to bring salvation to the *Jews*, that they had put him to death, but that he was risen again, and was to be the judge of quick and dead. These are the most important truths of religion, which ought to be received by all Christians. They represent faith in *Christ*, and holiness of life, as the only means of salvation; which is particularly pointed at in these words of *St. Peter*; *That God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. And, that Whosoever believes in Christ, shall receive remission of sins through his name.* IV. The attention, the submission, and obedience with which *Cornelius*, and all his house, heard *St. Peter*, ought to teach us to receive the word of God with the same dispositions when it is declared to us. V. While the apostle was speaking to *Cornelius*, the Holy Ghost came upon them that heard the word, and they received the gift of tongues. God, by working the same kind of miracle in behalf of the Gentiles, as he had done for the apostles on the day of Pentecost, most evidently shewed, that he intended to make the Gentiles

tiles also partakers of his grace; which obliges us to render thanks to God; us, I say, who were formerly heathens, forasmuch as he then vouchsafed to admit the Gentiles into his covenant, and to pour forth his spirit and grace upon them as well as upon the *Jews*.

CHAP. XI.

THIS consists of two parts: I. In the former we see that the *Jews* of *Jerusalem*, who had been converted to the Christian Religion, being offended that St. *Peter* should go to *Cornelius*, that was a Gentile, they were informed by this apostle how God had shewed him, that he should preach the Gospel to *Cornelius*, and the success of his preaching; at which the Christians at *Jerusalem* greatly rejoiced. II. In the latter part St. *Luke* relates, how the Gospel spread itself into several places, and particularly at *Antioch*: he makes mention also of a prophet named *Agabus*, who foretold a famine.

REFLECTIONS.

We see, in the former part of this chapter, that the Christians at *Jerusalem* were offended at first, because St. *Peter* had been with *Cornelius*; because it was not lawful for the *Jews* to have any familiar intercourse with the Gentiles. But when they knew that this apostle went to him by the order of God, and that even the Holy Ghost had been given to *Cornelius*, and those that were with him, they were pacified, and rejoiced that God was pleased thus to call the Gentiles to salvation. This teaches us, that instead of being jealous of the favours that God bestows upon others, we ought to rejoice, especially when they are called to repentance and everlasting life. This happy event, which occasioned so much joy to the saints at *Jerusalem*, and made them cry out, "God has then granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life!" ought ever to be matter of joy and thanksgiving

thanksgiving to us, since it directly respects us. Upon the latter part of this chapter there are three things to be observed: The first is, That the dispersion of the church of *Jerusalem*, and the persecution that was raised against the Christians, contributed to spread the Gospel in several places, and to establish several churches, particularly the church of *Antioch*, where the disciples of *Jesus Christ* were first called Christians. The second, That these churches were founded and kept up by the ministry of *Barnabas*, of *Paul*, and other persons that laboured for their edification. This shews, that the ministry of the servants of God is of great use in the church, provided it be performed by good men, and such as are filled with faith, and the Holy Ghost, as were those *St. Luke* mentions. The third consideration relates to the prediction that *Agabus* made of a famine that was to happen. This prediction proves that God knows things future, and that nothing comes to pass in this world but by his providential will. And the resolution the Christians took to make a collection for their brethren in *Judea*, is an example that should stir us up to assist those that are in want, and especially those that are our brethren, and the members of *Jesus Christ*; and even to prevent their wants.

CHAP. XII.

St. Luke relates three things in this chapter: I. The martyrdom of *St. James*, brother to *St. John*. II. The imprisonment of *St. Peter*, and his miraculous deliverance. III. The manner of king *Herod's* death.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we see, I. How the apostle *St. James*, as well as *St. Stephen*, sealed the truth of the Gospel with his blood; and that the Christian Religion was established by the sufferings of those that preached it, which confirms the truth and divinity of it.

II. God

II. God, who had permitted St. *James* to be put to death, did likewise permit St. *Peter* to be imprisoned by king *Herod*, but this apostle was miraculously delivered by an angel, who was sent to open the prison doors, and set him at liberty. This wonderful deliverance gives us occasion to own, that though God does sometimes allow the wicked to execute their designs, yet, when it pleases him, he restrains them, and sets bounds to their wickedness, and that he always watches over his faithful servants. We likewise see by this event, how powerful prayer is, since the church of *Jerusalem* obtained the deliverance of St. *Peter*, by the prayers they put up to God for him. III. The death of *Herod*, who was eaten of worms for a punishment of his pride, is worthy of our attention. This event, which is likewise related by *Josephus*, the *Jewish* historian, shews, that God confounds the proud; and particularly that the persecutors of the church do commonly make a fatal end; and that cruel and haughty princes, sooner or later, receive the punishment due to their wickedness.

CHAP. XIII.

I. ST. *Paul* and St. *Barnabas* go from *Antioch* to *Cyprus*, and from thence to *Paphos*, where St. *Paul* smote a *Jewish* impostor with blindness, and where he converted to the faith the proconsul *Sergius Paulus*, who was the chief magistrate of that island. II. After this, St. *Paul*, coming to *Antioch* in *Pisidia*, preaches to the *Jews* of that city, shewing that God, according to the promises he had made to their fathers, had sent *Jesus Christ* into the world; that this *Jesus*, whom they had crucified, was risen again; and that all those who should believe in him, would obtain salvation. III. Several persons, as well *Jews* as *Gentiles*, believing the preaching of St. *Paul*, the *Jews* were so enraged against him, as to drive him away and *Barnabas*; but the apostles declared to them, that

since they rejected the Gospel, they would, from that time forward, preach it to the Gentiles, and so left them.

REFLECTIONS.

WE see, in the beginning of this chapter, that *St. Paul* and *St. Barnabas*, passing through several places of *Asia* and *Greece*, by order of the Holy Ghost, and after that the ministers of the church of *Antioch* had prayed and fasted, did successfully preach the Gospel in those parts. These are tokens of the divinity of their calling; but we have, especially, one remarkable proof of the conversion of the governor of *Paphos*, and in the miraculous punishment of *Elimas*, who would have dissuaded the governor from embracing the Christian Religion. We see in these two persons, one of whom believed the preaching of *St. Paul*, as the other opposed it with all his might, that if the word of God saves those who receive it, it will condemn those who are not converted by it; and, that those who withstand the truth, and turn away others from faith and piety, do draw upon themselves the severest judgments of God. *St. Paul's* discourse in the synagogue of *Antioch*, is an abstract of the Christian doctrine. This apostle proves to the *Jews* that *Christ* was born of the seed of *David*, and that he is the promised Messiah; which he shews by the testimony of *John* the Baptist, and by the prediction of the prophets. He then declares, that this *Jesus*, who was crucified at *Jerusalem*, was raised from the dead, in conformity to the prophecies of the Old Testament. Lastly, he teaches them, that the design of the coming of *Christ* was, to obtain for men the remission of sins; that accordingly, all such as believed in him should be justified; but that those who rejected him should be excluded from salvation. Since this is the sum of the Christian Religion, we ought seriously and continually to attend to it, and to observe, that it is only by faith in *Jesus Christ*, and by obedience to the Gospel, that we can be saved.

saved. As for the effect of St. *Paul's* discourse, we see that several believed his preaching; but that most of the *Jews* continued obstinately in their unbelief, which was the reason why this apostle told them, that he would turn to the Gentiles. This shews what different effects the preaching of the Gospel produces; that some grow better by it, others reject it, and, instead of yielding to truth, haughtily oppose it. But if there are unbelievers, who continue in their blindness, which leads them to destruction, they are themselves the only cause of it, since none are excluded from everlasting life, but those who judge themselves unworthy of it.

CHAP. XIV.

I. ST. *Paul* and St. *Barnabas* preach at *Iconium*,
 II. From thence they go to *Lystra*, where having healed an impotent man, the inhabitants of that place took them for gods, which gave occasion to St. *Paul* to exhort them to renounce idolatry. III. Soon after, this apostle was stoned by the people of the town, whom the *Jews* had stirred up against him; but God having saved his life, he went to other places, and then returned to *Antioch*.

REFLECTIONS.

WE find here in general, that the apostles exercised their ministry with great zeal, and in the midst of persecutions; and that St. *Paul* in particular felt every where the rage of the *Jews*, since he was in danger of being stoned with *Barnabas* at *Iconium*, and afterwards was actually stoned at *Lystra*, and even left for dead. We likewise find that God preserved the apostles in the dangers to which they were continually exposed; that he wrought great miracles by them; and that, if they were displeased with the great opposition they met with from the *Jews*, they had the comfort of bringing several Gentiles to the faith.

II. The zeal St. *Paul* shewed when the inhabitants

of *Lyfira* took him and *Barnabas* for gods, and would have paid them divine honours, is very remarkable. Those who fear God, and have a true zeal, never seek their own glory; their great aim should be to glorify God alone, and to cause others to know and worship him. III. St. *Paul's* discourse to the *Lyconians*, who were idolators, shews, that God did at all times reveal himself to mankind, by the works of Nature and Providence, and has always given them proofs of his goodness. Upon which we ought to consider, that if the blessings God bestows upon men in a natural state, should engage them to love and serve him, we are much more obliged so to do; we, I say, to whom he has revealed himself by the Gospel and to whom he has given such strong proofs of his love, by sending his Son *Jesus Christ* into the world. Lastly, St. *Luke* takes notice, towards the end of this chapter, of the care which the apostles took to go to several places, that they might exhort the faithful, and chiefly settle pastors in every church, which shews the need Christians have of instructions and exhortations; and, particularly, the necessity of pastors and teachers; and that the will of God is, that there should be every where among Christians, ministers to teach, to exhort, and to govern the church.

CHAP. XV.

I. A Dispute being raised in the church of *Antioch*, because some *Jews*, who had been converted to Christianity, insisted that the Gentiles who embraced the same faith, ought to be circumcised as the *Jews*, and observe the ceremonies of the law of *Moses*, St. *Paul* and St. *Barnabas* were sent to *Jerusalem* to consult the apostles upon this question. II. The apostles being met together, declared that the Gentiles were not obliged to observe circumcision and the legal ceremonies, but that it would be sufficient for them to believe in *Christ Jesus* and to obey the Gospel, and to abstain from those things which might occasion

occasion them to fall into idolatry. And this is what the apostles communicated to the church of *Antioch*, in a letter which they sent by St. *Paul* and St. *Barnabas*. III. After which, those two apostles departed from thence to other places, to preach the Gospel.

REFLECTIONS.

WE have here a very plain explication of the doctrine of justification; and what is here said serves to clear other places of the New Testament, which treat of this doctrine; on which account this chapter deserves a particular attention: It must be observed here, that the question proposed was not to know whether the Gentiles, in order to salvation, were obliged to keep the commandments of *Christ*, and to do good works; no one then doubted of this truth, nor was there any dispute about it. But the question was, whether they were obliged to submit to circumcision and the rest of the ceremonies of the law of *Moses*, as certain *Jews* converted to Christianity pretended? It must be next remembered, that the apostles determined two things upon this question: The first, that the converted Gentiles ought not to be obliged to circumcision, and the practice of the *Jewish* ceremonies; but that it was sufficient to salvation, that they should sincerely believe in *Christ*. This the apostles proved, 1. Because God had poured his spirit upon the Gentiles as well as *Jews*, and had given them faith: And, 2. From the very nature of the *Mosaical* ceremonies, as well as by the predictions of the prophets. This is also the doctrine which St. *Paul* lays down in his Epistles, where he teaches, that *we are justified by faith alone in Jesus Christ, without the works of the law*. The second thing which the apostles declared was, that the Gentiles “should abstain, however, from what had been sacrificed to idols, from things strangled, and from blood, and from fornication.” The reason of this prohibition was, because the use of these things, as well

well as fornication, were part of the idolatrous worship of the Gentiles; and that therefore, if Christians did not abstain from these things, it might have drawn them into idolatry, and confirmed the Gentiles in their false religion. It appears from hence, that the apostles have not excused men from the observation of the moral law, but that they have only dispensed with the ceremonial law; and that, on the contrary, in teaching that we are justified by faith, they establish the necessity of good works, since faith cannot be sincere if it does not produce good works, and obedience to the Gospel. By the separation of *St. Barnabas* from *St. Paul*, mentioned at the end of this chapter, we find that these two excellent servants of God were of different opinions in some things; but this difference did not disunite them, nor hinder them from labouring incessantly in advancing the kingdom of *Christ*.

CHAP. XVI.

ST. *Paul* calls *Timothy*, to the ministry; and, after having been in divers places, he arrives at *Philippi*, a city of *Macedonia*, where he preaches the Gospel, and where a woman named *Lydia* was converted to the Christian Faith. While *St. Paul* was at *Philippi*, a tumult was raised against him, because he had delivered a maid-servant that was possessed with an evil spirit. He and *Silas* were both scourged and cast into prison, but being wonderfully delivered by God, the jailor was converted to Christianity, and the magistrates of *Philippi* intreated the apostles to depart, excusing themselves for their ill treatment of them.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are two things to be observed in the calling *Timothy* to the holy ministry. The first is, that *Timothy*, who was so excellent a servant of God, had been educated in piety; and that though he was young, every body gave him a good character; by which we see that

that none should be admitted to the ministry, but persons that fear God from their youth, and have the testimony of a holy life. The second, that *St. Paul*, who condemned circumcision, when imposed on the Gentiles as a necessary duty, did, notwithstanding, circumcise *Timothy*, lest the *Jews* should reject his ministry, under pretence that his father was a Gentile. This is an example of prudence, condescension, and charity, by which we are taught, that in indifferent matters we must submit as much as possible to the weak, avoid every thing that may give offence, and regard what may most contribute to the peace and edification of the church. II. *St. Luke* says, that the spirit did not suffer *St. Paul* to go to *Asia*, and that he was warned by a vision to preach the Gospel in *Macedonia*; upon which we are to observe, that it was God who guided the apostles to the places where they could do most good, and where their presence was most necessary. God does not always think fit that the Gospel should be preached in all places, but reveals it to some rather than to others, for wise, for just, and good reasons. III. *St. Luke* tells us, that there was a woman called *Lydia*, who heard *St. Paul*, and that God opened her heart to attend unto the things that were spoken by the apostles. This shews us, that faith is produced by hearing the word of God, and by the efficacy of his grace, which opens the heart, and disposes it for the reception of the truth. IV. *St. Paul* having delivered a maid-servant that was possessed with an evil spirit, her masters, instead of being affected with the miracle, perceiving they had lost the profit she brought them by divination, stirred up the magistrates against the apostle. This shews how great power there is in self-interest, to excite the passions of men, and to hinder them from knowing and receiving the truth. *St. Paul* and *Silas*, being scourged and imprisoned by order of the magistrates of *Philippi*, shewed a wonderful constancy in the pains and indignities they endured, singing praises to God in the prison. Thus Christians receive, not only with

patience,

patience, but likewise with joy, the evils they are exposed to for the sake of *Christ*. God opened the doors of the prison by an earthquake, and the apostles had the happiness of converting the jailor. This is a remarkable instance of God's protecting his faithful servants; and shews, that all that was done against the apostles turned to the glory of God, to the propagation of the Gospel, and their greatest comfort. Lastly, observe, that St. *Paul* pleaded that he was a citizen of *Rome*, to oblige the magistrates of *Philippi* to own their fault in causing him and *Silas* to be scourged and imprisoned without any form of justice. This he did to shew his innocency, and for the honour of the Gospel which he preached. It appears plain enough, that St. *Paul* did not, however, say this for fear of sufferings, since if he had declared at first that he was a citizen of *Rome*, he might have avoided both the scourging and imprisonment. Thus we see, that he joined great prudence to an admirable patience and a profound humility.

CHAP. XVII.

I. **ST.** *Paul* and *Silas* preached the Gospel with success at *Thessalonica*; but the *Jews* having stirred up the magistrates and people of that city against them, they go to *Berea*, and there convert several persons. II. But being persecuted there also by the *Jews*, St. *Paul* leaves that town and goes to *Athens*, a famous city of *Greece*. He there preaches the Gospel, and converts several persons.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE arrival of St. *Paul* and *Silas* at *Thessalonica*, and at *Berea*, their preaching in those two cities, and the tumult which the *Jews* raised against them, shews that St. *Paul* fainted not; that the *Jews* were the most bitter enemies of the Gospel, persecuting it in every place; but that they had likewise the comfort of gaining every where souls to *Christ*. II. What is said

in praise of the faithful at *Berea*, who cheerfully received the word of God, and examined the Scriptures, to see whether what *St. Paul* preached to them was agreeable thereto, teaches us to receive the truth with docility and readiness, and at the same time with knowledge and discernment; and that every Christian has a right to examine, by the word of God, the doctrine that is preached to him, that he may receive nothing that is not conformable to that divine word, which is the only rule of our faith, and submit obediently to every thing agreeable to it. III. We observe in this chapter, the great zeal of *St. Paul*. Grieved to see the city of *Athens* over-run with idolatry, he resolved to preach the Gospel there; and being intreated by some philosophers to inform them of the doctrine he taught, did not scruple to discourse to them concerning the true religion. In imitation of this apostle, we ought to be sincerely concerned when we see men engaged in sin and error, and to lay hold of all occasions that offer to deliver them from it. We observe in the discourse *St. Paul* made to the *Athenians*, on one hand, the wisdom and prudence of this apostle, who took occasion, even from their superstitions, to speak to them of the true God; and, on the other, the evidence and force with which he proved, by the clearest and strongest arguments, and by the testimony of their own poets, that there is but one God, almighty and all-gracious, who has created all things; and that it is an extreme folly, and the greatest of errors, to worship idols of gold, silver, or stone, as did the Gentiles. The discourse of *St. Paul*, contains the principal truths of religion; that there is but one only God, creator and preserver of the world; that this God is not far from every one of us; that he does not stand in need of our service, or any thing else from us, since it is he that gives us all life, motion, and being. But, above all, we ought to attend to these words, which are the abstract of the doctrine and duties of the Gospel, that *God now commandeth all men every where to repent; because he hath appointed*

appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained. These truths, which *St. Paul* once taught in an idolatrous city, are the truths which we profess to believe; but can be of no service to us, any farther than they stir us up to serve God, to fear him, to love him, and to obey the Gospel. We see, lastly, that this discourse of *St. Paul* was attended with the conversion of some persons, but that the greatest part of those who heard him continued in unbelief. Thus the preaching of the word of God converts some, whilst others scoff at and reject it.

CHAP. XVIII.

- I. *St. Paul* dwells at *Corinth* a year and a half, where he converts a great number of people, and is accused by the *Jews* before the magistrates. II. From thence he goes to *Ephesus*, to *Jerusalem*, to *Antioch*, and other places, to visit the churches, and to confirm them in the faith. III. There is mention made at the end of this chapter of *Apollos*, who was a minister of the Gospel, famous for his zeal, and his great talents.

REFLECTIONS.

I. IN what *St. Luke* relates of the stay of *St. Paul* made at *Corinth*, we may observe the zeal wherewith this apostle laboured every where for the advancement of the kingdom of *Christ*; and his disinterestedness and prudence, which appear in his choosing rather to work with his own hands for his subsistence, than to be maintained at the charge of the church: the troubles he met with from the *Jews*; and lastly, the divine protection in his afflictions; and the comfort he had in converting a great number of people in that city, and of founding there a very noble church. Thus the Christian Religion was more and more established by the preaching of the apostles, and in spite of all opposition of the *Jews*, and of other enemies of the truth.

truth. II. The several journies and voyages of *St. Paul*, related in this chapter, shew that he was continually employed in the duties of his calling, and that he laboured with indefatigable application in the edification of the churches. Thus all true and sincere Christians, but particularly the faithful ministers of *Christ Jesus*, exert all their strength, dedicate all their time, yea, their whole lives, to promoting the glory of God, and the salvation of men. III. What is here said to the honour of *Apollos*, of his zeal and eloquence, and his other great gifts, and of the extraordinary effects of his ministry, should make us acknowledge, that God grants a most valuable blessing to the church, when he sends zealous teachers and ministers, and well skilled in the Holy Scriptures, and endowed with the necessary talents and gifts for instruction and edification; and it ought likewise to engage us to beseech God, that he would always raise up such men.

CHAP. XIX.

I. *St. Paul* preaches the Gospel in the city of *Ephesus*, and does several miracles there. II. Certain *Jews*, attempting to cast out evil spirits in the name of *Jesus*, are ill treated by those who were possessed. III. Several persons addicted to magick were converted, and gave publick tokens of their repentance. IV. *St. Luke* adds an account of the tumult raised against *St. Paul*, by a silversmith, named *Demetrius*, who made great advantage by selling little silver shrines, formed after the model of a famous temple which was in the city, and which was devoted to a goddess of the heathens, named *Diana*. That man, finding that *St. Paul*, by preaching against idols, made him lose all his profit, stirred up the people against him, but the riot was appeased by the clerk of the city.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter is a continuation of the wonderful success of *St. Paul's* ministry. That apostle baptized
at

at *Ephesus* certain disciples, who, till then, had only been instructed in the doctrine of *John* the Baptist; but as soon as they were baptized in the name of *Jesus Christ*, and *St. Paul* had laid his hands on them, they received the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost. Besides these, he converted there a great number of persons, in spite of the opposition of the *Jews*; he here wrought surprizing miracles; and several people that practised the magick art, renounced their superstition, and their impiety. Thus did this apostle every where advance the kingdom of *Christ*, and destroy that of the devil. What happened to the *Jewish* exorcists, who endeavouring to cast out devils in the name of *Jesus*, were ill treated by those who were possessed by the evil spirits, tended to convince the *Jews*, and all the world, that none but the apostles, and such as believed in *Christ*, were really able to work miracles, and had power over the unclean spirits; the divine efficacy of the name of *Jesus*, and the excellence of his religion is displayed only by good men; but it does not belong to wicked men, or to hypocrites, to take the name of the Lord in their mouths. *St. Luke* informs us, that several people living at *Ephesus*, converted by *St. Paul's* preaching, came and confessed their sins, among whom there were some, who having practised magick, and unlawful arts, chose rather publickly, to burn their books treating upon those subjects, than to sell them, though they would have brought them in considerable sums. This example is remarkable; it teaches us, that those who are truly penitent, do not scruple to own their faults, to give publick tokens of their repentance, and to renounce all that has been to themselves, or might be to others, an occasion of sin and scandal, though it be never so precious, or dear and profitable to them. What is principally to be observed concerning the sedition which was raised at *Ephesus* against *St. Paul*, is, That it was raised by some crafts-men, who feared that if the people left off worshipping idols, their trade would lose its credit, and their gain be diminished; and to

stir up the people, they pretended a regard to religion, and a zeal for the goddess *Diana*. Nothing acts with greater force upon the minds of men than the love of money; nothing raises their passions so much; they cannot bear the truth, when it is contrary to their interest; and when they can do it, they conceal their interest under the mask of religion. This great tumult was at last, with some difficulty, appeased by the town-clerk, and St. *Paul* by this means delivered from the danger that threatened him. By which we see that tumults and seditions are very dangerous, and therefore we ought to avoid every thing that tends to promote them; and that wise men are bound to prevent and to calm them by all possible means.

CHAP. XX.

I. ST. *Paul* leaves *Ephesus*, and goes to *Troas*, where he preaches the Gospel to the Christians of that city, and raises one from the dead. II. From thence he goes to *Miletus*, where having sent for the pastors of the church of *Ephesus*, he gives them a very serious exhortation; and then takes his leave of them.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to observe in this chapter, I. First, That St. *Paul* arriving at *Troas*, went to the place where the Christians of that city were met together on the first day of the week to break bread, that is to say, to celebrate the Lord's Supper, and preached to them very late in the night. From thence we may gather, that the apostles, and first Christians assembled themselves to serve God, and for mutual edification; that Sunday was set apart for that purpose; that the holy Sacrament was administered in those meetings, and discourses made for the instruction and exhortation of the faithful; and consequently, that these practices are as old as Christianity itself and of divine institution. II. The second thing which deserves our attention, is, that St. *Paul* restored a young man to life, who fell from

from the upper room of the house where the believers were gathered together. This was a miracle very remarkable, which, without doubt, comforted the Christians of *Troas*, and strengthened them in the religion of *Christ*. But what most of all deserves to be considered in this chapter is, the discourse which St. *Paul* made to the pastors of *Ephesus*, before he left them: in which we see with how great integrity, zeal, and disinterestedness he discharged his ministry; his constancy under afflictions, his great piety, the care he took to exhort and teach for three years together, both in publick, and from house to house; his settled resolution of serving the Lord faithfully, even to the end, and even of sacrificing his life with joy, for the sake of the Gospel. We see there also, the grave and affecting exhortations which he made to the ministers of *Ephesus*, and the ardent and tender wishes by which he recommends them to God, and the whole church over which they were appointed. From thence the ministers of the Gospel may learn faithfully to discharge their office, and to fulfil the duties of it with diligence, zeal, and sincerity; to watch carefully over the Lord's flock, and to take heed that no false or offensive doctrines slide in among them; never to conceal any thing that may be of use to those who are committed to their trust; to warn them, not only publickly, but privately also; to suffer patiently the troubles to which they are exposed; to pray continually for their flocks; and lastly, to have no regard nor value for themselves, their own interests, nor even their lives, provided they may have the satisfaction of finishing their course, and faithfully discharging the ministry which they have received from the Lord *Jesus*. What St. *Paul* says on this occasion teaches Christians, that the office of pastor is of the greatest importance; that God is very gracious to us when he sends us faithful ministers; and that when they have warned and instructed us with fidelity, they will not be answerable for our souls if we do not do our duty. The tears which the pastors' and Christians of *Ephesus* shed

shed at parting with *St. Paul*, prove how dearly they loved him; and is likewise an argument how strong that love ought to be that unites the pastors to their flocks, and how much Christians should dread to be deprived of the ministry of the faithful servants of God.

CHAP. XXI.

ST. *Paul* departing from *Miletus* arrives at *Tyre*, and from thence goes to *Cesarea*, where he is warned by a prophet that he should be imprisoned at *Jerusalem*, and delivered over to the Gentiles. This prediction did not affright *St. Paul*, who declared, that he neither feared bonds nor even death; and so he set forwards for *Jerusalem*. When he was arrived there, he entered into the temple with four other persons, who had a vow upon them, to observe what was ordered by the law of *Moses* in the like case. Though he did this by the advice of the other apostles, to shew that he was not an enemy to the law, as he had been accused, the *Jews* did nevertheless raise a tumult against him, and would have put him to death, if the captain of those that guarded the temple had not rescued him out of their hands.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE prediction of *Agabus*, who warned *St. Paul* that he should be cast into prison at *Jerusalem*, shews, that nothing befel that apostle, but by the special will of God; and that it was the Lord who exposed him to those persecutions, and who thought fit that he should be delivered to the Gentiles, and afterwards carried to *Rome*, that he might bear witness to the Gospel every where. The noble resolution and constancy which *St. Paul* expressed, when the disciples besought him with tears not to go up to *Jerusalem*, declaring that he was ready, not only to be bound but to suffer death for the name of the Lord *Jesus*, shews, that this faithful servant of God was entirely

devoted to *Christ*, and that nothing was capable of shaking his constancy. This is an example that ought to be imitated by all Christians, but particularly by the ministers of the Gospel: And, as the Christians of *Cesarea*, when they saw *St. Paul* was determined to go, no longer opposed his journey, but resigned to the will of God; we ought also to submit to what God has determined, and to sacrifice our dearest inclinations to his will, as soon as it is manifested to us. What *St. Paul* did, when he went to the temple of *Jerusalem*, and purified himself according to the custom of the *Jews*, must be looked upon as an act of prudence and charity; and which tended to prove, that he was unjustly accused of being an enemy to the law of *Moses*. This prudent behaviour of *St. Paul*, teaches us to accommodate ourselves as much as we can, and to comply in indifferent matters with those who are prejudiced against us, and to neglect nothing to bring them off from their wrong notions. We find, however, that notwithstanding what *St. Paul* did to comply with the *Jews*, they rose up against him to take away his life. These are the common effects of passion and prejudice: they so blind men, that nothing can undeceive them. Lastly, It is to be observed, that Providence delivered *St. Paul* from the rage of the *Jews*, by means of the tribune, making use of what this apostle had done, in compliance with the *Jews*, to cause him to be seized and delivered by that very people, into the hands of the Gentiles, as had been foretold. Thus God secures those that serve him, and all that men do against them, tends only to accomplish the ends of Providence.

CHAP. XXII.

I. **T**HIS is a discourse, in which *St. Paul*, to justify himself from the accusation of the *Jews*, that he was an enemy to their law and nation, gives the history of his life and conversion. II. But the *Jews* insisting upon his being put to death, the captain ordered

dered he should be examined by scourging; which, however, was not done, because this apostle declared that he was a citizen of *Rome*; but he was sent back, that he might appear before the council of the *Jews*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE design of St. *Paul's* discourse, which is here set down, was to shew the *Jews* he was no enemy to their religion; that, so far from it, he himself had been very zealous for that religion, in which he was brought up at *Jerusalem*; and was formerly a most violent persecutor of the Christians; that the reason why he had embraced the Christian Religion, and preached it every where, was in obedience to the heavenly call. In this behaviour of St. *Paul* towards the *Jews*, we may observe, that he endeavoured both to justify himself, and to pacify them, but that he did not, however, dissemble the truth. This teaches us to speak and act always with temper and prudence, especially when we have to do with persons prejudiced against us; and, at the same time, with courage and resolution, without disguise, and without dissembling the truth through fear. The rage the *Jews* were in when St. *Paul* said, that the Lord had sent him to the Gentiles, shews, that the chief cause of their hatred against this apostle, was the aversion they had to the heathens. This procedure of the *Jews* shews, likewise, that nothing can undeceive people who labour under strong prejudices. Lastly, St. *Paul*, when they were going to examine him by scourging, thought fit, in order to avoid it at this time, to plead his privilege as a citizen of *Rome*, which he had neglected to do on another occasion. He acted thus, because it was a lawful means of securing himself against their violent and unjust treatment. From whence we may conclude, that it is lawful to make use of our right, and to employ all just and reasonable methods to defend ourselves, when we are in danger of being oppressed, or unjustly treated.

CHAP. XXIII.

THIS chapter consists of two parts: I. *St. Paul's* appearing before the council of the *Jews*. II. The relation of a conspiracy, which forty *Jews* had formed to take away this apostle's life, and the manner in which he was preserved.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may make four reflections upon this chapter ;
 I. That *St. Paul*, being unjustly struck, by the order of the high priest *Ananias*, threatened him with the judgment of God ; but that he, nevertheless, declared the respect he bore to his character, when he was acquainted, that he who had caused him to be thus struck, was the high priest ; which he did not know at first. What we are to learn from hence is, that we ought to speak respectfully of our superiors ; and, at the same time, that God will punish unjust judges, and such as abuse their authority. II. That *St. Paul* occasioned a division between the Pharisees and Sadducees, by saying, that he was arraigned for believing the resurrection of the dead. He acted wisely in preventing, by this means, being oppressed by the *Jews*, and shewing that he taught what the Pharisees themselves believed concerning the resurrection. III. That God appeared to *St. Paul* by night, and bid him fear nothing, but to be prepared to go, and bear witness to the truth at *Rome*. This was necessary for the support of the apostle, in the midst of those troubles which the *Jews* raised against him, to instruct him in the designs of Providence, and to encourage him to make every where an open profession of the truth. IV. We see, in the last place, that forty *Jews* having conspired to slay *St. Paul*, he was preserved from that danger by a young man, his nephew, who gave the captain notice of it. We may observe from this, how great the rage of the *Jews* was against *St. Paul* ; to what excesses hatred, joined with a false zeal for religion,

gion, is capable of hurrying men, and how dangerous it is to be hurried away by passion, and to make rash vows. Finally, we should admire, in this event, the means that Providence uses to preserve innocent and good men from impending dangers.

CHAP. XXIV.

I. *St. Paul* being accused by the *Jews* before the governor *Felix*, gives an account of his behaviour and his faith. II. *Felix* desiring to hear *St. Paul*, that apostle discoursed of the duties of justice, of temperance, and of the last judgment, in such a manner as filled him with terror. However, *St. Paul* remained a prisoner at *Cesarea*, for the space of two years.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WHAT we are to consider first upon this chapter, is, that *St. Paul* being very unjustly accused by the *Jews*, before the governor *Felix*, defended himself in a grave, solid discourse; in which, whilst he justifies himself from the accusations brought against him, and denies those things which the *Jews* falsely laid to his charge, he does, nevertheless, make an open confession of the faith and doctrine which he taught. We may learn from this instance of sincerity and zeal, that neither fear, nor any other consideration, ought to hinder us from asserting the truth. II. It is observable, that the apostle, giving an account of his faith and behaviour, declares he believed and taught nothing but what was written in the law and the prophets, and particularly the resurrection of the dead, of the just and of the unjust. By what *St. Paul* says on this subject, we see, that the doctrine of the resurrection is a very important part of the Christian Religion; and, that those who profess to believe it, ought to live a holy and unblameable life, having a conscience void of offence towards God, and towards men. We should, in the last place, seriously take notice of the terror with which *Felix* was seized, when *St. Paul* talked to

him about righteousness, temperance, and the last judgment; of that governor's obduracy, who finding his own conscience reproach him with injustice, impurity, and several other crimes, would not suffer the apostle to proceed. Here we see the power of the word of God, and the effects which the truth of the Gospel, and especially the doctrine of the universal judgment, produce, even upon the minds of the wicked. But we likewise observe, how sinners resist that word, and the motions of their own conscience. This should therefore be a warning to us, not to harden our hearts, nor ever to delay our conversion, when God causes us to hear his voice, and when we feel ourselves affected with it. The wickedness of *Felix* appeared yet farther, in his leaving *St. Paul* imprisoned two years, not that he thought him guilty, but because he was covetous, and hoped to extort money from him. Thus avarice, and respect for men, are the cause of great injustice, and hinder men from attaining the knowledge of the truth.

CHAP. XXV.

I. **T**HE *Jews* desire *Festus*, who succeeded *Felix* in the government of *Judea*, to send *St. Paul* from *Cesarea*, where he had been a prisoner two years, to *Jerusalem*, having formed a design to kill him on the way: but *Festus* did not grant them their request, telling them they might come to *Cesarea*, which they did. Upon this, *St. Paul* appealed to the emperor, and *Festus* resolved to send him to *Rome*. II. About this time king *Agrippa* coming to *Cesarea*, and being told of *St. Paul*, was desirous to see and hear him.

REFLECTIONS.

THE reflections to be made on this chapter are, I. That the *Jews* having treacherously contrived to kill *St. Paul*. God did not suffer them to execute their wicked and cruel design, which should lead us to acknowledge the protection which God affords his faithful

ful servants. II. That *St. Paul* being accused by the *Jews*, before *Festus*, continued to maintain his innocence, and at last desired his cause might be referred to the emperor. This procedure of the apostle shews, that when we are unjustly accused, we may have recourse to courts of justice, and make use of all the lawful means for our defence which Providence puts in our power. III. It must be likewise considered, that Providence did thus dispose matters, not only that *St. Paul* might not fall into the hands of the *Jews* but also that he might thereby have an opportunity of going to *Rome*, and of preaching the Gospel in that great city, as our Lord had foretold he should. IV. The behaviour of *Festus* towards *St. Paul*, shews, that that governor, though a heathen, had more integrity and equity than the *Jews*, and even than the high priests, and magistrates of *Jerusalem* themselves. Lastly, It is to be observed, that king *Agrippa* coming at that time to *Cesarea*, was desirous to see and hear *St. Paul*, and that this was an occasion with which Providence furnished this apostle to speak in the presence of that prince, and a great number of people of the first rank: which turned to the justification of *St. Paul*, and the doctrine he preached, as we see in the following chapter.

CHAP. XXVI.

I. *ST. Paul* speaking in the presence of king *Agrippa*, of *Bernice*. of the governor *Festus*, and a great number of officers, and people of distinction, gives the history of his life, conversion, and manner of exercising his ministry to that time. II. He was interrupted by *Festus*, who took him for a madman, and by king *Agrippa*, who was moved by his discourse. III. Finally, this prince, the governor, and all that were present, acknowledged the innocence of *St. Paul*; but it was resolved that he should be sent to *Rome*, because he had appealed to the emperor.

REFLECTIONS.

I. IN the discourse St. *Paul* made before king *Agrippa*, to give an account of his conduct, both before and after his conversion, we discover a character of wisdom, of moderation, and, at the same time, of ingenuity, steadiness, and courage, which very plainly denote the innocence and zeal of this apostle. The mild and respectful, but, at the same time, frank and sincere manner, in which he spoke upon this occasion, should teach us to answer always as we are exhorted by St. *Peter*, with meekness and humility, those who require an account of our faith, and of the hope which is in us, and never to conceal nor dissemble the truth.

II. We are to consider upon this discourse, that if St. *Paul* persecuted the church before his conversion, he did it in ignorance and unbelief, but that, otherwise, his life was irreproachable; and, that after the Lord had called him, he served him with great zeal. What we are to learn from hence, is, that sins of ignorance are more easily pardoned than others, and that we are, likewise, more easily reclaimed from them; that God reveals himself sooner or later, to such as are of an upright heart; and that, whenever he calls us, we ought to obey, and follow that call immediately. III. We see by the judgment *Festus* made of St. *Paul*, taking him for a mad-man, that the most serious things seem folly to the worldly-minded; and the wise and respectful answer which St. *Paul* returned to *Festus*, is a noble instance of moderation and courage.

IV. St. *Luke* mentions a very remarkable circumstance; that king *Agrippa*, hearing St. *Paul*, said, that he had almost persuaded him to be a Christian; to which the apostle replied, that he wished he, and all present, were really and truly Christians. Upon which it may be observed, that that prince, who professed the *Jewish* religion, and believed the prophets, found in the discourse of the apostle, a probability, at least, by which we may see the force of truth; but the impression was not to salvation, since *Agrippa* took no care to be farther

farther instructed therein. It is in vain to be but faintly affected with the word of God, or to be a half, an almost Christian; we must be so altogether, and with our whole heart. Lastly, We find that king *Agrippa* and *Festus*, after they had heard *St. Paul*, and examined the accusation laid against him, confessed his innocence, and would have acquitted him, if he had not appealed to *Cesar*. By this means this apostle's innocence was vindicated; and, if he was sent to *Rome*, it was not as a criminal, which would have been a great hindrance to the Gospel he was to preach in that city. Thus *St. Paul* experienced, on this occasion, God's peculiar protection; and the Lord fulfilled in him, what he had foretold of the apostles, namely, that they should be brought before kings and rulers, to bear witness of him; but that he would assist them with his spirit, and put into their mouth what should be necessary for them to speak in their defence.

CHAP. XXVII.

THIS chapter contains a relation of the voyage which *St. Paul* made by sea from *Cesarea* to *Rome*, where what is chiefly to be observed, is, that he was in danger of perishing, the ship in which he was having run a-ground.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS history presents us with four remarks: I. The first relates to the continual danger *St. Paul* was exposed to. After having escaped the rage of the *Jews*, he had like to have been cast away in his voyage to *Rome*, and besides, to be murdered by the soldiers. II. The second is, that God, who had protected him till then, was pleased to deliver him from both these dangers. We see, therefore, that nothing can hurt those whom God favours with his protection, and who serve him faithfully. III. The third, that God did not only save the life of *St. Paul*, but for his sake, preserved

preserved all those that were in the ship with him; so that when they were shipwrecked, there was not one lost. This wonderful deliverance, which St. *Paul* foretold, must needs convince them, that this apostle was a true servant of God; and it is a lesson to us, that it is always a great happiness to be in the company of good men; and that, upon their account, God often spares the rest, granting them deliverance, and shewing them great favour. IV. It is to be observed, in the last place, that though God had assured St. *Paul* by an angel, that none of those who were in the ship with him should perish, yet that apostle declared, that if the mariners did not remain in the vessel, they could not be saved. The promises which God makes us, should not hinder us from using those means that prudence directs, and which he himself has established; wherefore our reliance upon God ought never to be attended with rashness or negligence.

CHAP. XXVIII.

I. ST. *Paul* having been shipwrecked upon the coast of the isle of *Maltha*, staid there three months, and wrought sundry miracles. II. He departs from *Maltha*, and arrives at *Rome*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE humanity with which the inhabitants of *Maltha* received St. *Paul*, and those which were shipwrecked with him, should teach Christians to exercise hospitality, and heartily to assist those that are in distress. The judgment which the people of that island passed upon St. *Paul*, when he was bit by a viper, shews, that men, even the most rude and uncultivated, have always thought that divine vengeance does not suffer crimes to go unpunished, which is a most certain truth; however, the example of St. *Paul* proves, that it would be judging rashly, to imagine that all those whom any misfortune befalls, are pursued by the justice of God. The opinion which the inhabitants of
Maltha

Maltha conceived of *St. Paul*, taking him for a god, when they saw he was not hurt, must be looked upon as an effect of the ignorance of those idolatrous people; but this miracle, as well as that of curing the father-in-law of *Publius*, and other distempered persons of that island, oblige us to acknowledge the accomplishment of that promise which *Christ* made his apostles in the xvth chapter and 18th verse of the Gospel of *St. Mark*: *They shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.* Lastly, *St. Paul* being arrived at *Rome*, saw not only the Christians that were in that great city, but likewise the *Jews*, whom he informed of the reasons that induced him to take a voyage to *Rome*, and to appeal to the emperor; he spoke of their nation, and of the *Jews* at *Jerusalem*, with great temper, and afterwards endeavoured to bring them to believe in *Jesus Christ*; and finding, at last, that several among them continued in their unbelief, he declared to them, that because of their obdurateness, he would preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. This his behaviour, full of wisdom and charity, shews, that we ought to omit nothing that may edify the world, or bring back those who are prejudiced against the truth; and that, if then people will continue obstinate, they are inexcusable.

Thus ends the History of *St. Luke*, and the Book of the *Acts of the Apostles*. It may be farther observed, that *St. Paul* remained a prisoner at *Rome* two years; that, during that time, he wrote several Epistles, which have been preserved in the New Testament; that he was afterwards set at liberty, and made several journeys; and that, returning to *Rome* about five years after, he there suffered martyrdom, being beheaded in the reign of *Nero*.

The End of the ACTS of the APOSTLES.

THE

THE
EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL
TO THE
ROMANS.

ARGUMENT.

The Epistle to the Romans was wrote about the fifty-seventh year of our Lord. It was placed at the head of the other Epistles, because of the importance of the matters contained in it, and the dignity of the city of Rome. The design of this Epistle is to shew, that saith in Christ, through the Gospel, is the only way of salvation; and that circumcision, and the works of the law of Moses, gave the Jews no advantage over the Gentiles; and, therefore, that the Gentiles, who embraced the Gospel, were not to be obliged to submit to circumcision, and the ceremonies of the law, as certain Jews converted to Christianity pretended; and that God might call the Gentiles, and receive them into his covenant, as the prophets had foretold. This is what we are taught in the eleven first chapters of this Epistle. In the five last, St. Paul exhorts the Romans to the principal duties of the Christian life, and especially to charity, forbearance, and peace; forasmuch as the divisions which prevailed at that time, between the Jews and the converted Gentiles, troubled the peace of the church.

CHAP.

CHAP. I.

IN this chapter *St. Paul* does two things: I. He salutes the believers at *Rome*, and expresses his joy at hearing of their faith, and the great desire he had to go and see them. II. He begins to shew that as all men were sinners, they could be saved only by *Jesus Christ*; and for that purpose he makes appear, that though God had discovered himself to the Gentiles, by the works of the creation, they did not serve him, but fell into idolatry, and all kinds of disorders.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WE observe, at the beginning of this Epistle, the love of *St. Paul* to the *Romans*, his desire to contribute to their edification, and his zeal to make known the Gospel in all places, and to all persons, and even in the city of *Rome*. All Christians, and particularly ministers of the Gospel, ought to imitate *St. Paul* in this respect; to love tenderly the church of *Christ*, and the faithful; to pray continually for them; to procure their edification with all their might, and never to be ashamed of truth or godliness. II. We see, that although God manifested himself to the Gentiles by the works of creation and providence, they did not glorify him, but abandoned themselves to sins of every kind; and that even those nations where arts and sciences flourished, fell into the most shameful idolatry, and most unworthy of reasonable creatures, and thereby provoked God's wrath against them. If the Gentiles were guilty before God, and inexcusable for these things, as *St. Paul* declares, how guilty should we be, if, after God has made known himself to us, not only by the works of nature, but by his word, we did not serve him as we ought! III. What the apostle says in this chapter, with respect to the two principal sins of the Gentiles, which were idolatry, and the dreadful disorders which they fell into with respect to uncleanness, shews us
what

what condition we should be in, if God had not enlightened us with the light of the Gospel, and into what horrid actions sensuality and uncleanness may lead mankind. IV. Finally, in the last verses of this chapter, *St. Paul* describes the vices of the heathen, saying, that they were filled with pollutions, covetousness, injustice, and passions and sins of every kind; and that although they knew that those who did such things were worthy of death, they did not forbear committing them. We must own, to our shame, that this is the picture of the lives and manners of a great number of Christians; but it likewise teaches us, that they who thus imitate the heathens in their disorders, who know much better than they the law of God and his will, must expect the severest judgments.

CHAP. II.

I. *St. Paul* having shewn, in the foregoing chapter, that the Gentiles were sinners, proves in this, that the *Jews*, who condemned the Gentiles, were sinners also; and, by abusing the light they enjoyed, and the goodness of God, they would appear much more guilty before his tribunal than the Gentiles, who knew no other law but that of nature and conscience. Whence it follows, that the *Jews* could not pretend to be justified before God by their works, and that they had no more right to salvation than the Gentiles. II. And because the *Jews* gloried in having the law of God, and circumcision, which was the token of the covenant, the apostle declares, that all these external advantages, which distinguished them from the Gentiles, did not render them more acceptable to God, but were useless to them whilst they neglected to keep the law.

REFLECTIONS.

THE design of this chapter in general, is to shew that the *Jews* were guilty before God, as much, and even more than the Gentiles; and, consequently, that they

they could not be justified nor saved but by *Jesus Christ*. Besides which, we may gather from this chapter the following instructions: I. That those who condemn sin in others, and do, nevertheless, commit the like, will be inexcusable, and shall not escape the judgment of God. II. That God uses great forbearance towards sinners, in order to bring them to repentance; and that those who abuse such forbearance, draw upon themselves the most terrible effects of his wrath. III. That God will one day render to all men according to their works; that he will give everlasting life to those who have persevered in well doing; but that affliction and despair will be the portion of the wicked. IV. That, at the day of judgment, men will be judged according to the degree of knowledge which they have had; that the Gentiles will be judged by the law of nature; but, that the punishment of those who shall sin against the law that God has given them in his word, will be much more rigorous; by which we may see what Christians are to expect, who sin against the light of the Gospel. V. And lastly, St. *Paul* proves that the *Jews* in vain gloried in being more enlightened than the Gentiles, and having the sign of circumcision. He reproaches them with transgressing the law of God in a more criminal manner than the Gentiles themselves, and causing them to blaspheme the name of God; whence he concludes, that circumcision, and other privileges which they enjoyed, were of no use to them, and that they would be treated as Gentiles and uncircumcised. What St. *Paul* says with so much evidence against the *Jews*, teaches us, that we ought not to boast of knowing the will of God, of being in covenant with him, and of having the external tokens of his covenant, unless we do his will; that he is not a true Christian who is only so outwardly; but that he shall be esteemed a Christian, who is so inwardly, and in the heart, and who is approved not by men, but by the Lord himself.

CHAP. III.

ST. *Paul* shews three things in this chapter: I. That the *Jews* had great advantages over the *Gentiles*; that if they did not believe in *Jesus Christ*, this did not hinder God from being always true in his promises, nor them from being justly punished; and, that though the unbelief of the *Jews* served to manifest the righteousness, truth, and goodness of God, yet they would, nevertheless, be wholly inexcusable. II. St. *Paul* proves, by several texts of the Old Testament, that the *Jews* were guilty of the violation of the law of God; and he takes notice, that those texts did only relate to the *Jews*. III. He concludes from thence, that the *Jews* could not have been justified by the law of *Moses*, and that neither they nor the *Gentiles* could be justified any other way than by faith in *Jesus Christ*; and he says, that this doctrine was so far from being opposite to the law, that, on the contrary, it established it more strongly.

REFLECTIONS.

THE doctrine which St. *Paul* teaches throughout this chapter, and which he designs to prove, is, that since the *Jews* were involved in sin and guilt as well as the *Gentiles*, they could not pretend to be justified by the law of *Moses*, and that there was but one only means of justification for both, viz. faith in *Jesus Christ*, who has made an atonement for the sins of all mankind. Besides this doctrine, which is the foundation and sum of the whole Christian Religion, there are three particular remarks to be made upon this chapter: I. That as the privileges which the *Jews* enjoyed were of no benefit to them, by reason of their unbelief, so, likewise, the advantages which God has granted to us Christians, will be useless to us if we abuse them, and will not secure us from his judgment. II. That the infidelity and ingratitude of men, do not make God unrighteous when he punishes them; that such infidelity does even help to

shew, that God is righteous, good, and true; but that nevertheless, we must not think that God cannot condemn sinners with justice, because sin serves to manifest his glory; for the glory of God is only accidentally the effect of sin; the aim and design of the wicked is not to advance God's glory, but to satisfy their passions. What the apostle says upon this occasion, proves likewise, that we must never do evil under a pretence that good may follow. III. And lastly, It appears by the last verses of this chapter, that the intention of *St. Paul*, in what he here teaches, was not to abolish the law, or to render it useless; nor ought we from thence to infer, that Christians are allowed to break the law, and to continue in sin; but, on the contrary, that the doctrine of justification by faith is, at the bottom, the same with that of the law and the prophets; and that this doctrine is so far from dispensing with the duties of holiness, that it leads men more effectually to the practice of them, as is shewn by the apostle in the following chapters.

CHAP. IV.

I. **T**HE apostle proves, in this chapter, by the example of the Patriarch *Abraham*, that men are justified by faith, and not by circumcision, nor by the works of the law of *Moses*. Accordingly he observes, that justification consists in the pardon of sin, and that *Abraham* himself was justified by his faith, and that he received the promises of God long before he was circumcised. II. He represents, in the next place, what was the virtue and efficacy of *Abraham's* faith; and concludes, that all who believe in *Jesus Christ* dead, and risen again, should be justified by faith, as *Abraham* was.

REFLECTIONS.

ST. Paul teaches us, in this chapter, in the clearest manner, what justification is, and how we may partake of it. I. He shews, that justification, and the happiness of sinful man, consists in the pardon of sin, which

which God grants to mankind in his pure mercy; and affirms, that this favour is obtained by faith in *Christ*, and not by the works of the law of *Moses*. This he proves clearly, by observing that *Abraham* was justified by his faith, and the promises were made to his posterity long before he was circumcised. From whence it evidently follows, that it was not the circumcision, but faith, that rendered him acceptable to God; that therefore circumcision was not necessary to salvation; and all those who imitate the faith of this patriarch, will be accounted his children and posterity, and justified as he was. But the manner in which the apostle speaks of the faith of *Abraham*, and its effects, is an invincible proof, that it is impossible to be justified, and obtain salvation, if our faith be not like that of *Abraham's*, and our faith in God and his promises be not efficacious and active, inducing us to expect every thing from him, to hope in his promises, and obey him even in the most difficult matters, as did this holy patriarch. This is a most important doctrine, which we ought to comprehend well, and carefully remember, and which should serve for a rule to our thoughts, and to our actions.

CHAP. V.

THIS chapter consists of three parts: I. *St. Paul* describes the fruits of justification, and the admirable effects which faith, and a conviction of the love of God, produceth in believers, even in the midst of afflictions and persecutions. II. He represents the great love of God to men, in giving his Son to die for them. III. He shews, that *Christ* alone is the fountain of all these precious advantages: in which view he compares *Christ* with *Adam*, and shews, that if *Adam* had subjected all men, without exception, to sin and to death, even those that lived before *Moses*, and to whom God had not given a positive and revealed law, as he did to *Adam*; much more ought we to believe, that the mercy of God should

should extend to all mankind by *Jesus Christ*; from whence he concludes, that our Lord is the author of salvation, and of life, to all such as truly believe in him.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may observe, by the reading of this chapter, I. The happy condition of true believers, since being justified by faith, they are so firmly persuaded, and have so agreeable and lively a sense of the love of God, that they rejoice continually in the expectation of the glory of heaven, even in the midst of the greatest tribulations. II. We ought seriously to meditate upon what is here said concerning the great love that God has shewn to us sinful men, by delivering up his Son to die for us, and particularly his love to those that are reconciled to him, and sincerely believe the Gospel. This consideration is a powerful motive to gratitude, full of comfort to believers, and very proper to confirm them in his love. III. The comparison St. *Paul* makes in this chapter between *Adam* and *CHRIST*, tends to shew, that our Lord came to deliver man from sin and death, to which they all became subject by the fall of *Adam*. This ought to make us look upon *Christ*, as him in whom we find a deliverance from all our evils, and who is the giver of spiritual and eternal life to all such as believe in him, and obey him. But it likewise appears from hence, that none but those who have a share in the righteousness and life of *Christ*, can obtain salvation; and that such as do not receive him with a true faith, and who imitate *Adam* in his disobedience, remain in condemnation and in death.

CHAP. VI.

THE design of St. *Paul* in this chapter is to shew, I. That the doctrine of justification by faith in *Jesus Christ*, and of the abundant grace of God to the greatest sinners, which he has taught in the fore-

going chapters, does by no means authorize Christians to live in sin, but, on the contrary, does powerfully draw them from it; and that baptism engages them to live a holy life. II. He shews in the same view, that we ought to be so far from sinning, upon a pretence that we are no longer under the law, but under grace, that it is grace which delivers us from the slavery and bondage of sin, to make us the servants of God, that is, to dedicate ourselves wholly to his service.

REFLECTIONS.

WE ought seriously to meditate on the doctrine St. *Paul* here teaches us; it amounts to this: I. That we should not think, that because the grace of God is offered to men of corrupt lives, we are allowed to live in sin. II. That, far from it, the baptism which we have received, and the belief in *Christ's* death and resurrection, oblige us in the strongest manner to renounce sin, and to lead a spiritual life, in imitation of that of our Saviour. III. That it would be a thing highly unworthy of our calling, and of the condition of Christians, if sin should reign in us, and if we should suffer ourselves to be carried away by the inordinate desires of the flesh; but that we ought much rather to cleave to God, live only for him, and employ our bodies and souls in his service, and to his glory. IV. That it would be an abuse of the doctrine of grace, and a great affront to *Christ* and his Gospel, to fancy that we may sin without fear, upon a pretence that we are no longer under the law, but under grace; that, on the contrary, the effect which grace ought to produce, and the design for which it is given us, is to release us from the shameful bondage of sin, and to make us submit ourselves to God and his righteousness, and cause us to bring forth the fruits of sanctification, to the end, that we may obtain everlasting life. These are truths of very great weight, and the chapter in which they are contained ought to be read and meditated carefully on.

CHAP. VII.

THE apostle having taught in the preceding chapter, that we must not think that Christians are allowed to live in sin, on pretence that they are not under the law, but under grace, confirms the said doctrine in this chapter, and shews, I. That as a woman is at liberty to marry again when her husband is dead, so Christians may forsake the law of *Moses*, to cleave to that of *Jesus Christ*, and that they were delivered from the law of *Moses*, that they might be subject to *Christ*, who calls them, and fashions them to true holiness. II. He shews next, that this change was very advantageous to them, since they were thereby in a condition to produce the fruits of holiness, and to serve God with a new spirit. III. That he might the better explain his thoughts, he says, that the law was holy and good; that it was not the cause of sin; but that it had not the same efficacy as the Gospel, to sanctify men, and to free them from corruption. It is in this view, that the apostle represents, in his own person, the state of a man that lives under the law, and who is in subjection to sin and death; and he renders thanks to God for having delivered him from that condition, through *Jesus Christ* our Lord.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS is a chapter which ought to be well understood, and which must not be misapplied. The design of *St. Paul* is, to teach that the doctrine of grace tends to sanctify men, as he had determined in the preceding chapter. Thus when he makes mention of *a carnal man sold to sin*, in whom there is no good, who is a slave to the law of sin, who does not do the good which he approves, but who commits the evil he disapproves; it must be not thought that he intended to describe the condition of a regenerate man, and of a Christian, that partakes of the spirit

of *Jesus Christ*; for the apostle says, in this very chapter, that Christians are delivered from this state of sin and condemnation, to bear fruit unto God, and serve him with a new heart; and we are taught in the following chapter, that believers are no longer under the bondage of the flesh and of sin, but that they have been set free from them by *Jesus Christ* our Lord. But St. *Paul* designed to represent, in his own person, in a figurative way of speaking, very usual with him, the condition of a man who is under the law; and who, not having faith and the spirit of *Christ*, is a slave to his passions. The doctrine of the apostle, therefore amounts to this: That the law had not the same efficacy as the Gospel, to deliver men from their corruption, and to sanctify them; and therefore, that the doctrine of justification by faith, very far from indulging men in the liberty of sinning, tends to render them holy, and to free them from the slavery of their passions. From whence it follows, that those who are still engaged in this slavery, and in whom the desires of the flesh prevail, have not a true faith, and belong not to *Jesus Christ*.

CHAP. VIII.

I. ST. *Paul* goes on to shew, that Christians are no longer subject to condemnation and to sin, like those who are under the law; and that they do not govern themselves by the motions of the flesh, but by those of the spirit of God; whence he concludes, that believers were under an indispensable obligation to live, not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit, and to behave themselves as the children of God, and heirs of his kingdom. II. And because it might be imagined Christians were not reconciled with God, since they are exposed to persecutions, the apostle proves, that these persecutions hinder them not from partaking of the love of God. This is what he means, when he says, that all creatures, that is, all the faithful, underwent great evils; but that, however,

ever, they waited with a firm hope for the manifestation of the glory of the children of God. III. *St. Paul* adds, that God supported them by his Spirit in the midst of their distresses, that he heard their prayers, and that their afflictions were so far from being hurtful to them, that they contributed to their happiness, since God had decreed that the faithful should arrive at glory through sufferings, after the example of *Jesus Christ*. IV. From all this the apostle infers, that the happiness of God's elect is certain; and that God having given them his own Son, who died, and intercedes for them in heaven, no creature nor any evil thing can hinder them from attaining everlasting happiness.

REFLECTIONS.

THE instructions which the first part of this chapter affords us are, I. That the condition of true believers is very happy, since there is no more condemnation for them, and since they are delivered from sin and death, by the grace of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and by the power of his Spirit. II. That the true and sure token by which we may discover those that belong to *Christ*, is, that they do not live according to the flesh, but mortify the lusts thereof; that they set their hearts upon spiritual things, and follow the motions of the Spirit of God in their whole behaviour. III. That Christians therefore ought to study to live a holy life; that those who live in sin have not the Spirit of *Christ*, nor can they please God, but are in a state of condemnation and death; whereas those who labour to mortify the deeds of the body, do partake of the spiritual life, and of the inheritance which God reserves for all his children. The second part of this chapter teaches us, I. That the troubles and afflictions of this life, are not to be compared with the joys of heaven, and are so far from being obstacles to the happiness of God's children, that they rather promote it; and that in general all things work together for
good

good to those that love God. II. That the faithful, and those that God loves most, do sigh and groan, in expectation of this great glory which God has reserved for them, and are sometimes exposed to the severest trials; but that God supports and comforts them in their conflicts by his spirit, and even makes use of afflictions to lead them to glory, and make them conformable to *Jesus Christ*. III. The apostle tells us, that God will infallibly glorify all the elect; that having given them his Son, he will with him grant them every thing that is necessary; that the death and resurrection of *Christ*, his ascension into heaven, and his intercession, ought to fill them with a firm trust in the midst of their severest trials; and that there is no creature in heaven or earth, that can separate them from the love of God. These considerations tend very much to the comfort of the true children of God, and are very proper to support them in their afflictions, to fill them with joy, hope, and confidence, and to confirm them more and more in the love of God and true holiness.

CHAP. IX.

ST. *Paul* having taught, that the Gentiles would partake of the grace of God as well as the *Jews*, an objection seemed to follow from this doctrine, viz. That the *Jews*, who were the chosen people of God, were excluded from the promises, while the Gentiles, who descended not from *Abraham*, were made the people of God: this objection he answers, I. By expressing his tender regard for the *Jews*, which was so great, that he was willing to devote himself to death, and to be used like the worst of men, if that might contribute to their salvation. II. He shews next, by the example of *Isaac*, whom God preferred to *Ishmael*, who was also the son of *Abraham*; and by the example of *Jacob*, who was chosen before *Esau*, although both had the same father and mother, and were twins,

that all those who are descended from *Abraham*, are not considered as his posterity, nor comprehended in the divine covenant. III. *St. Paul* lays down farther, that God may admit into his covenant, and choose for salvation, those whom he thinks fit; and that men have no reason to complain, because he does nothing, even with the wicked, but with justice and goodness; bearing long with them, and rejecting them only because of their unbelief. IV. Lastly, He concludes from what he had said, that God might call the Gentiles to salvation; which he confirms by the prophets, who had plainly foretold the calling of the Gentiles, and the rejection of the *Jews*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE abstract and substance of this chapter is, that God, who is the Lord of all things, and who is perfectly just and supremely good, may impart his favours to whom he pleases, and that men have no reason to complain; that accordingly, he might decree salvation to the Gentiles as well as to the *Jews*, and even justly reject the *Jews* because of their unbelief, as the prophets expressly foretold. This doctrine obliges us to praise the mercy of the Lord, who has vouchsafed to call us to his covenant, who were originally Gentiles; and to acknowledge, that if we be chosen for salvation, it is wholly owing to the favour of God. We are to consider, in the next place, that as all those who descended from *Abraham* did not partake of the promises of God; and that even the *Jews*, to whom these promises were made, have been cast off by reason of their unbelief, notwithstanding the privileges of their calling; so the advantages of the divine covenant will become useless to us, if we do not make suitable returns to the goodness to which God has shewn us, and if we exclude ourselves from salvation by our ingratitude and unbelief.

CHAP. X.

I. **ST.** *Paul* continues to treat of the rejection of the *Jews*, and calling of the *Gentiles*; he expresses a tender regard for the *Jews*, bearing them witness that most of them had a zeal for God; but they had rejected the Gospel, because they placed their righteousness in the law of *Moses*, not observing that that law led them to *Jesus Christ*. II. He shews, next by the words of *Moses*, that faith is a much more easy means of being justified before God, than the law was; and that this means of obtaining salvation consists in believing heartily in *Jesus Christ*, and in making a public profession of his doctrine. III. He adds, that this salvation was offered to all men by the preaching of the Gospel; and proves from the prophets, and particularly from *Moses* and *Isaiah*, that the *Gentiles* were to be called, and that the *Jews* should be rejected, because of their unbelief and hardness of heart.

REFLECTIONS.

WE learn from hence, I. That there is no other means of attaining to salvation, but that which is offered us in *Jesus Christ*, and that those who seek for other means cannot be saved. II. That the way which the Gospel prescribes for justification, has nothing in it beyond our power, or which is not even very easy; and that therefore we shall be inexcusable if we do not lay hold of so precious an advantage. III. *St. Paul* teaches us in this chapter, that all those shall be saved who with their heart believe in the Lord *Jesus*, and confess him with their mouth; which shews, that a sincere faith, and a public profession of the Gospel, is absolutely necessary to salvation. IV. He likewise teaches us, that God has been pleased to offer salvation to all mankind by the Gospel; that faith comes by hearing the word of God; and, that this word may be heard, there must be persons sent to preach it. This should convince us of the necessity of preaching the

the Gospel, and the value we ought to have for the word of God, and the ministers of the Gospel. V. And lastly, We see that the calling of the Gentiles, and the unbelief of the *Jews*, were expressly foretold. Here we are to consider on one hand, that God foresaw, and, long before it came to pass, foretold what was to happen to the *Jews* and Gentiles; which invincibly proves, that there is a Providence which governs all things, and that the Christian Religion, is of divine original; and, on the other hand, it is a warning to us, that those Christians who obey not the Gospel, and resist the heavenly call, shall be deprived of salvation, as the *Jews* were, and shall even be more severely punished than they.

CHAP. XI.

ST. *Paul*, having spoken of the rejection of the *Jews* asks whether God had wholly cast off his people whom he had chosen? To which he himself answers two things: I. The one is, that all the *Jews* were not rejected, since there were several of them who had believed in *Jesus Christ*; as in the time of *Elijah*, there were in *Israel* many worshippers of the true God; but that the rest of that nation continued in unbelief, as had been foretold by the prophets. II. The other is, that the *Jews* were not cast off for ever, but only for a time; and that their fall had given occasion to the calling of the Gentiles; but that they would one day be re-admitted into covenant with God. III. After this the apostle exhorts the Gentiles to improve the goodness of God towards them, and his severity towards the *Jews*, lest if they should be puffed up with pride, and fall into unbelief like the *Jews*, they also should be cut off. To this end he compares the Gentiles to a wild olive tree, grafted into the good olive-tree, by which last he represented the *Jews*. IV. And lastly, He plainly foretels the conversion of the *Jews*, proving it from the prophets; and concludes this subject, adoring the wisdom and mercy of God,

God, which appear in his dealings with *Jews* and Gentiles, and what is to befall them before the end of the world.

REFLECTIONS.

THE general reflection on this chapter is, that God had not entirely cast off the *Jews*, since divers of them did believe the Gospel, and the time will come when all that nation will be converted. This proves the veracity of God's promises, and is a very strong confirmation of the truth of the Christian Religion, and of the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures. To this general consideration we may add the four following particular reflections. I. That as in the time of the apostles, and in the days of *Elijah*, there were believers among the *Jews*, God has always some elect in the midst of the greatest depravity. II. St. *Paul* shews the use we should make of the doctrine he has taught in this Epistle concerning the rejection of the *Jews*, and the calling of the Gentiles; namely, that it ought to inspire us with sentiments of fear, humility, and gratitude; us, I say, who are the posterity of the heathens, and induce us to make a right use of the goodness of God, and persevere in faith, lest we lose the title we now have to the grace of God, and eternal life. III. We have here a most remarkable prediction of the conversion of the whole *Jewish* nation; and of all other nations coming into the church. The divine authority of the Scriptures, and the prophecies which have been already accomplished, should convince us of the certainty of this great and happy event. And we plainly see God intends one day to call the *Jews*, since they still subsist, though dispersed throughout the world for so many ages. We ought to expect, with faith and joy, the accomplishment of this prediction, to pray for the coming of the kingdom of God, and for the conversion of the *Jews*, and in the mean time to entertain a tender compassion, and true charity for that people whom God still loves. IV. And lastly, When we consider
 God's

God's dealings with *Jews* and Gentiles, and how he proposes to unite them one day in his church, this should stir us up to adore the ways of the Lord, to celebrate his mercy and wisdom, and to say with St. *Paul*, *O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!—For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: To whom be glory for ever: Amen.*

CHAP. XII.

AFTER St. *Paul* had shewn that the Gentiles were called to salvation by the great mercy of God, the remaining part of this Epistle is taken up in setting forth the duties of the Christian life, and particularly of peace and charity. In this chapter he does three things: I. He exhorts believers to devote themselves to the service of God, and to renounce the world. II. He recommends to Christians, and especially to such as had any office in the church, or any gifts which distinguish them from others, to exercise their callings, and to employ their gifts for the public good. III. He exhorts them above all to charity; he describes the manner of exercising this virtue towards our brethren, and towards those who hate and persecute us.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may learn in general, from this and the following chapters, in which St. *Paul*, after having treated of justification and the calling of the Gentiles, speaks of the duties of Christian morality; that the design of the Gospel is the practice of holiness, and of good works; and that this in particular is the effect which the doctrine of our redemption ought to produce, as well as the consideration of the great mercy that God has manifested to us in his Son. This chapter furnishes us likewise with three particular lessons. I. That true piety and the service which God requires of us, consists

sists in devoting ourselves entirely to him, in renouncing the world, in not imitating worldly men in their manner of living, and being renewed in our minds by an entire submission and conformity to the will of God.

II. That being all members of the body of *Christ*, which is the church, we ought to apply the gifts we have received to the advantage of our brethren; those of us, especially, who are called to any office in the church, by discharging it with zeal and integrity.

III. That charity is the most important duty, and comprehends all the rest, and particularly the following, which the apostle here sets down; which are, to love one another sincerely; to be ready to do all good offices; to sympathize in the good or evil that befalls our brethren; to comfort and assist those that are in affliction; and to live together in a spirit of humility, peace, and unity. Charity does yet farther oblige Christians to love and bless those who hate them and injure them, to endeavour to have peace with all men, to abstain from revenge, and to render good for evil. These are the most essential duties of the Religion we profess, and we deserve the name of Christians no farther than we sincerely practise them.

CHAP. XIII.

ST. *Paul* speaks in this chapter, I. Of our duty to the higher powers. II. Of love to our neighbour, which is the sum of the law of God. III. He shews that Christians ought to live in holiness, sobriety, and chastity, since God has delivered them from the darkness of ignorance, and enlightened them with the light of the Gospel.

REFLECTIONS.

THE three parts of this chapter afford us these three instructions: I. That kings, princes, and magistrates, are appointed by God; and that it is from him they receive authority to govern the people, and punish those who disturb the peace of society; and there-

therefore every one is bound in conscience to submit to the higher powers, to be faithful to them, and to render them all that is due to them. II. That the love of our neighbour is as it were the sum of the whole law, which teaches us, that charity is a very considerable part of the duty of a Christian; that the true way to fulfil what the law commands, is to have a spirit of peace, meekness, and forbearance, and to love our neighbour sincerely. III. *St. Paul* teaches us, that since the clouds of ignorance, in which men formerly lived, are dispersed by the light of the Gospel which now shineth, we ought to avoid sensuality, dissoluteness, impurity, and all the desires of the flesh, and to live in chastity and temperance, following the example and divine precepts of our great Lord and Master. And to encourage us to observe these holy laws, let us consider the happy state in which God has placed us; let us always represent to ourselves, that the time of our salvation draws near, that our chief study may be, to partake of it through the mercy of our Lord *Jesus Christ*. Amen.

CHAP. XIV.

FOR the right understanding of this chapter, we must remember, that there were in the time of *St. Paul* certain Christians, who having been *Jews*, and not being sufficiently instructed, scrupled to eat of certain meats, and observed a distinction of days, after the *Jewish* manner. *St. Paul* shews, I. How those weak persons were to be treated. He says, that we must bear with them, and avoid all disputes with them, since they who had different sentiments did follow each of them the dictates of their own conscience, believing in *Christ*, and being partakers of his grace. II. To confirm this doctrine, he represents Christians as living only unto the Lord, who alone has an entire authority over them; and therefore, every thing that they do, should be designed for the glory of God, and the edification of others; that nobody has a right to condemn

condemn others, since every one is to give an account of himself to God. He shews, III. That those who were better instructed in their Christian liberty, ought not to abuse that liberty, nor offend weak people, who made a scruple of eating certain meats. IV. And lastly, he says, that the spirit of Christianity is a spirit of peace and forbearance; that it was a great sin to condemn, discourage, or give cause of offence to our neighbour; but that every one ought to abstain from what he thought unlawful, and even from those things which he is in doubt about, since every thing that is done without faith, and the approbation of our conscience, is sinful.

REFLECTIONS.

THE doctrine St. *Paul* here teaches amounts to this: That Christians are bound to bear with each other; that those who are most enlightened, ought to have the greatest consideration for such as are weak, and less knowing than themselves; that they ought not to despise them, nor do any thing that may grieve or offend them; that we ought even to abstain from things indifferent and lawful, when we foresee they may be an occasion of scandal to others. These are maxims of charity and forbearance, from which we ought never to depart; by the right observation of which, the glory of God, the peace of the church, and the common salvation, are very much promoted; while disputes and quarrels are extremely prejudicial to the edification of the church, and therefore ought to be avoided as much as possible. Lastly, We should take particular notice of what St. *Paul* lays down in this whole chapter, and particularly at the end of it, viz. That every one should have a great regard to his conscience, and that *whatever is not of faith is sin*. This teaches us, that those who act against their own conscience, or even those that do a thing without being well assured in their mind that it is lawful, are very guilty before God, even though that thing be in itself innocent; and that, in order to please the Lord, and
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enjoy peace of conscience, our first care should be to be well instructed in our duty, and then follow the dictates of our conscience, prudently avoiding every thing that may disturb the peace of the church, or give offence to its members.

CHAP. XV.

I. **T**HE apostle continues to exhort the *Romans* to charity and forbearance towards such as are weak in faith, proposing to them, for that purpose, the example of *Jesus Christ*, and beseeching God to inspire them with sentiments of peace and charity.

II. In this view he represents to them, that *Christ* was sent to unite the *Jews* and Gentiles in his church, as has been foretold by the prophets; by which he would convince them, that there ought to be no division among them.

III. He speaks next of his ministry, and of the plentiful fruits of his preaching among the Gentiles, and in several parts of the world. IV. And lastly, He tells the *Romans* that he intended to visit them after he had made a journey to *Jerusalem*, on account of a collection which was making for the Christians in that city. He then recommends himself to their prayers, and prays likewise for them.

REFLECTIONS.

WE learn from this chapter, I. That those who are advanced in knowledge and piety, ought to behave with great condescension and charity to those who are not come up to them, and thereby to imitate the meekness and goodness of our Lord. II. St. *Paul* shews the design of this Epistle to the *Romans*, and the end of his doctrine, saying, that *Christ* came to save, not only the *Jews*, but the Gentiles; and to accomplish, by this means, the promises which God had made to their forefathers by the prophets. This is a truth which we should meditate upon, in order to strengthen our faith, and excite our gratitude towards God. III. We are to consider what St. *Paul* says in

this chapter of his travels and labours; of the wonderful success of his ministry, of the many churches which he had founded in several parts of the world, and of his design to go to *Rome* and other places; all which is a proof of the great zeal of this apostle, his perfect charity, and, above all, of the power of God, and the divine efficacy of the Gospel, so visible in the miracles St. *Paul* wrought, and the surprising success of his preaching. This is an example which the ministers of *Christ* ought to imitate as far as they are able, by labouring incessantly in the establishment of the kingdom of God. IV. And lastly, St. *Paul's* so earnestly recommending himself to the prayers of the Christians at *Rome* shews, that the ministers of *Christ* do greatly stand in need of the prayers of the church, and that one of the chief duties of Christians, is to pray for their spiritual guides; as it is likewise the duty of pastors to offer up continually prayers for their flocks.

CHAP. XVI.

THIS chapter contains, I. The salutations St. *Paul* sends to several Christians of *Rome* in his own name, and in the name of the ministers of *Christ*, and the believers that were with him at *Corinth*. II. Exhortations to beware of those who occasion troubles in the church, and who teach false doctrines. III. His wishes and prayers in behalf of the *Romans*.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are two things to be observed in the salutations contained in this chapter: The first is, that the Gospel had already made a considerable progress at *Rome*, and that there were in that city a great number of people, who made profession of the Christian Religion. The second reflection relates to St. *Paul's* love and charity to the church at *Rome*, and particularly to the faithful, who are here named. Such is the true spirit of Christianity. Thus do Christians sincerely love one another, are strictly united, and pray for each

each other, though they be never so distant; particularly for those who are distinguished by their zeal and piety. II. St. *Paul* directs us next how to behave towards those who teach false doctrines, or cause sects and divisions in the church; that is, to be upon our guard against them, to avoid them, to adhere constantly to the pure doctrine of the Gospel, and to the pastors who preach it. III. And lastly, We ought to join our thanksgivings to those of the apostle at the end of this Epistle, and to bless God, that he has revealed in *Christ Jesus* the calling of the Gentiles, and the redemption of mankind, a mystery which, till then, had been kept secret from the foundation of the world; and had made known the Gospel to all nations for the obedience of faith. To this great God, only wise, be glory for ever, though *Christ Jesus*. Amen.

The End of the Epistle of St. PAUL to the ROMANS.

THE
FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL
TO THE
CORINTHIANS.

ARGUMENT.

This Epistle was wrote about the fifty-sixth year of Christ. St. Paul gives several instructions in it, concerning the defects and disorders in the church of Corinth, particularly the divisions among them; and upon several important articles of religion.

CHAP. I.

I. **T**HE apostle begins the first chapter with salutations, thanksgivings, and prayers. II. He reproves the *Corinthians* for the divisions that reigned among them, on account of the ministers who had preached the Gospel to them, some of them being for *St. Peter*, others for *Apollos*, or for himself; whereas, being baptized in the name of *Christ*, and not in the name of any of the apostles, they ought to look upon themselves as belonging to *Christ* alone. III. And when several endeavoured to make *St. Paul* despicable, the apostle confesses that his preaching was not attended with worldly wisdom and eloquence, but that he
preached

preached after a very plain manner, and suitable to the nature of the Gospel, which is the doctrine of the cross : God having thought fit, in his infinite wisdom, to save mankind in a way which appeared weak and foolish to unbelievers, and the wise men of the world; viz. by *Christ* crucified; and to call to salvation such as were the least considerable among men.

REFLECTIONS after reading the chapter.

I. WE may learn from what St. *Paul* says at the beginning of this Epistle, and the prayers he makes for the *Corinthians*, that the perfection of Christians consists in being enriched with all sorts of spiritual gifts, so as to be found unblameable at the coming of *Christ*. This is what we ought all to endeavour at, and what we ought to desire for each other. II. St. *Paul's* reproof of the *Corinthians* for their divisions, teaches us, that there is nothing more hurtful to the church than schisms and divisions, especially about matters of religion; that Christians ought never to call themselves the disciples and followers of any minister or teacher, whoever he be; and that the ministers of the Gospel, far from giving occasion to such divisions, or of keeping them up, ought, after the example of St. *Paul*, to hinder them as much as possible, being always actuated by a spirit of humility and peace, seeking nothing but their Master's glory, and the edification of his church, which is best promoted by unity and concord. III. It appears from this chapter, that ministers ought to preach the Gospel in great simplicity, without aiming at the wisdom and eloquence of the world, which is nothing but foolishness before God; the end of their ministry being to preach *Christ* crucified. IV. What St. *Paul* here says, shews, that Christians ought not to value riches, nobility, power, and other temporal advantages, which give no title to the grace of God, but are often an obstacle to true faith. Lastly, Since the doctrine of the Gospel, and particularly the cross of *Christ*, is the means that God

has chosen, in his wisdom and goodness, to save men; we ought to cleave to *Jesus who is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.*

CHAP. II.

THIS chapter consists of three parts. St. Paul says,

I. That he had preached the Gospel with great simplicity. II. That though his doctrine was plain, yet it was nevertheless very sublime, and of a heavenly and divine original. III. Whence he concludes, that this doctrine being spiritual and heavenly, ought to be preached after the plainest manner; and that if it was rejected by any upon that account, it was because such men were carnal and earthly-minded.

REFLECTIONS.

THE ministers of *Christ*, and all Christians, should learn from this chapter, I. That the vain eloquence and the false wisdom of the world, ought not to have any thing to do with the preaching of the Gospel. II. That the doctrine of the Gospel, though very plain, is the most sublime, and the most perfect that ever was preached; that it infinitely surpasses all that the most learned men could ever discover; teaching things which *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath revealed unto us by his spirit.* It follows from hence, that a divine revelation was absolutely necessary to our salvation, which we can attain no other way; that we ought therefore to esteem the doctrine of the Gospel above all things: and that those who preach it should never depart from the Christian simplicity; and that this doctrine does not want to be supported by worldly eloquence. III. We ought likewise to observe what St. Paul says farther, that *the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him.* This teaches us, that when men do not understand nor relish the doctrine of *Jesus Christ*, it is because they are carnal, full of prejudices, and

and worldly-minded. This doctrine being altogether spiritual, can be received by none but those who are spiritual, who are weaned from the love of the world, and suffer themselves to be guided by the spirit of God.

CHAP. III.

ST. *Paul* does four things in this chapter: I. He says, that he had taught the *Corinthians* nothing but the first principles of Christianity, because of their weak condition, and he reproaches them for continuing still in the same state, as appeared from the divisions that reigned among them on account of the ministers that preached the Gospel to them. II. To put a stop to these divisions, he says, ministers are only instruments in the hand of God for the salvation of men, and that the whole fruit of their ministry proceeds from God alone. III. To the same end he adds, that, like a wise master-builder, he had laid the foundation, that is, he was the first who preached the Gospel to the *Corinthians*; and that those who came after him, ought to take care to preach none but true and useful doctrines, which he calls, gold, silver, and precious stones; but not vain and doubtful doctrines, which he compares to hay or stubble; and says, that those who preach such doctrines would lose the fruits of their labour; but that nevertheless if they had preserved the fundamentals of Christianity, they would be saved, as passing through the fire, and by a particular favour. IV. And lastly, St. *Paul* declares, that the church being the temple and house of God, he will destroy those that hinder its edification, by teaching dangerous doctrines, and by stirring up divisions, or in any other manner; and that the *Corinthians* should glory in God above, and not in those who preached the Gospel, since the apostles and other ministers were not appointed for their own advantage, but for the glory of God.

REFLECTIONS.

THE four parts of this chapter furnishes us with four instructions. I. That the ministers of *Jesus Christ* ought to propose his doctrine with prudence, and suit their discourses to the capacity of those whom they teach. II. When *St. Paul* says, that he *planted, that Apollos watered, but that God gave the increase*, this shews, on one hand, that the ministry of pastors and teachers is very necessary, it being the method which God has thought fit to make use of for the edification of the church; but that on the other hand, the efficacy of their preaching must be ascribed to God alone. III. The third instruction is, that it is of great importance that none but profitable and edifying doctrines be taught in the church; and that ministers should be careful never to mingle with the essential doctrines of religion such as be vain, uncertain, and useless, for fear of losing the fruit of their labour, and of hindering edification. IV. When *St. Paul* represents to the *Corinthians*, that they were the temple of God; and that, if any one defiled this temple, him would God destroy; this should teach all Christians, and especially those who are set over the church, how careful they ought to be to procure the edification of others, and avoid every thing that may give offence, and occasion trouble in it. Lastly, The apostle shews, that instead of taking occasion from the ministry of the Gospel to be divided, they ought to refer this holy office, and all other spiritual advantages they enjoy, and in general all things, to the glory of God and their own salvation. This is the great design they ought always to have in view.

CHAP. IV.

ST. *Paul's* design here, is to remedy the divisions that prevailed in the church of *Corinth*, on account of the ministers who had preached the Gospel there. In which view he does three things. I. He says, that
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the *Corinthians* ought to respect the ministers of *Christ*, but that it was not for them to prefer some before others; that although he discharged his office with a good conscience, he did not think himself better than his colleagues; that all those gifts which ministers are endowed with, do proceed from God; and that it is God alone, and not men, who is to judge of their fidelity. II. And as the persecutions to which the apostle was exposed, more than any other minister of the Gospel, gave some men occasion to despise him, he takes an opportunity to describe the evils he endured, and the patience with which he suffered, and even glories in them; that so he might induce the *Corinthians* to think of him as they ought, and to imitate his patience, meekness, and humility. III. He acquaints them, that he should shortly visit them, threatening to make use of that power which God had given him to put a stop to the disorders in their church, and to punish those who were the authors of them.

REFLECTIONS.

WE see here, I. What sentiments Christians ought to entertain of the true ministers of *Christ*; namely, to esteem and reverence them, but yet without attributing to them what belongs only to God, and without adhering to some, and despising others. II. The manner in which St. *Paul* speaks of the different opinions men had of him, teaches us, that we ought not indeed to be intirely indifferent whether men think well or ill of us; yet, that we ought not to set too high a value upon the opinion of men; that it is God only who can judge of our faithfulness, and that it is he who will make manifest hidden things, and the thoughts of men's hearts, and who will render to every one his due praises. III. That all the gifts and advantages we enjoy proceed from God; that we have nothing but what we have received from him; and that therefore, instead of valuing ourselves upon them, the glory thereof belongs to him alone. IV. We see in

in the description which St. *Paul* gives of his sufferings, that the faithful servants of God, and all true Christians, may be exposed to disgrace and miseries of every kind; but the example of this apostle likewise shews, that such as are thus afflicted, far from thinking themselves unhappy in this condition, and growing uneasy under it, or desiring to revenge themselves upon those who are the cause of their sufferings, ought to bear all these evils with patience, and even with joy, for the edification of the church; and to pray for those who injure them; and to be little concerned at the hatred and contempt of the world, provided they have the approbation of God and their own conscience. The last verses of this chapter shew, that St. *Paul* tenderly loved the *Corinthians*, that it was against his will that he threatened them with chastisement, and that he had nothing else in view but their edification. Such is the spirit of all the true ministers of the Lord.

CHAP. V.

I. *ST. Paul* reproveth the *Corinthians* for suffering among them an incestuous person, and he delivers him to Satan, that is to say, to be afflicted in his body by Satan, which was an extraordinary punishment that the apostles had power to inflict. II. He represents to them, by the comparison of leaven, that it is very dangerous to suffer notorious sinners in the church, since they infect and corrupt others. III. And lastly, he orders the *Corinthians* to cut off from among them, by excommunication, those that are impure, and all such as live in a scandalous manner, and not to consider them as brethren, or members of the church.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter contains a very important doctrine; the necessity of discipline in the church, and especially of that part of discipline which consists in excommunication.

nication. St. *Paul* reprove the *Corinthians* for not removing the incestuous person from among them; which teaches us, that when persons, who stile themselves Christians, fall into sins which dishonour the religion of *Jesus Christ*, the whole church ought to mourn for it, and should not suffer those persons to remain in her communion; but that they ought to be cut off by excommunication. St. *Paul* most expressly declares, that we ought not to acknowledge for brethren, nor even for Christians, the unclean, unjust, slanderers, drunkards, or other scandalous sinners, nor have any familiar dealings with them. This is the law of *Jesus Christ*: This is what the holy apostles have commanded in his name, and the rule appointed by them in all churches for the honour of the Christian Religion, and the saving the sinners themselves, and to prevent their evil examples from corrupting other members of the church, and this is what the first Christians religiously practised; on which account we are forced to own, that the church is not now governed as it ought to be, since this kind of excommunication is hardly exercised any where; nevertheless, the duty of all true Christians is to avoid, as far as possible, all correspondence with wicked men, and to distinguish themselves from them, by a holy and exemplary life; and let us remember, that those sinners who are suffered to live in the external communion of the church, though they deserve to be excluded from it, are not owned by *Christ* for his true members, nor shall they escape the punishment due to their hypocrisy and wickedness.

CHAP. VI.

I. THE apostle reprove the *Corinthians* for having recourse to heathen judges and magistrates to determine their law-suits. II. He adds, upon this occasion, that those who wrong their neighbour, shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven, any more than those who are guilty of impurity, and other crimes which

which he here mentions. III. He exhorts the *Corinthians* to pay great regard to the edification of their brethren, in the use of things indifferent and lawful; but above all, to avoid impurity, proving by several arguments, that this is by no means a matter of indifference, but in itself evil, and utterly inconsistent with the profession of Christianity.

REFLECTIONS.

THE reflections on this chapter are the four following: I. That Christians, being brethren, ought to avoid law-suits as much as possible; that they should endeavour to determine difficult points in an amicable way; and if they be forced to have recourse to judges, they should do it in a spirit of justice and equity, of meekness and moderation, and without giving any scandal. II. That those who wrong others, whether by unjust law-suits, in any other manner, shall no more partake of the kingdom of God, than the impure, than thieves and covetous, or other scandalous sinners. Let it be here observed, that some of the *Corinthians* had lived in these crimes while they were heathens, but that God engaged them to renounce them all, by calling them to the Christian Religion, and by cleansing them from their sins by the blood of *Jesus Christ*, and by the grace of his Holy Spirit; which shews, that our holy Religion does not allow men to continue in their sins, but has a direct tendency to cleanse and sanctify them, and affords them all necessary means and assistance to that end. III. The third instruction relates to impurity. St. *Paul* shews in this chapter, that this sin separates those who commit it from the communion of *Christ*, and suffers them no longer to be his members; that unclean persons grossly offend our blessed Saviour, dishonour their own body, which ought to be the temple of the Holy Ghost, and thereby deprive themselves of that Holy Spirit. Lastly, He declares, that since we are redeemed by the precious blood of *Jesus Christ*, our
bodies

bodies belong to God as well as our souls: that therefore we are no longer our own, but are bound to glorify God both with our souls and bodies. All these considerations are of great weight, and since *St. Paul* alledges so many reasons to dissuade Christians from impurity, we plainly see that this sin is very great; that we ought to have it in abhorrence; and endeavour, in all respects, to lead a pure and holy life.

CHAP. VII.

ST. *Paul* answers in this chapter several questions which the *Corinthians* had proposed about marriage. I. He gives an account of the institution and duties of the marriage state. II. He says, that there is an advantage in not being married; but that, however, Christians are at liberty to marry. III. He exhorts married persons not to separate, and shews what was the duty, in this respect, of such men and women as were married to heathens. IV. He orders all Christians to continue in the several callings and conditions in which Providence had placed them, and to live according to the will of God. V. Lastly, He declares, that the condition of virgins, and those who lived in celibacy, and of widows, was the happiest, particularly in those times of persecution. But, however, that they were at liberty to marry.

REFLECTIONS.

FROM what has been read we may learn, I. That marriage is a holy and honourable state; but that the duty of Christians in that state is, to live in union and concord, in purity and chastity, in piety and devotion, by setting apart seasons for fasting and prayer. II. That although the condition of those who do not marry be more happy, yet every man is left to his liberty; that every one ought to regulate his conduct in this matter, as he finds himself called to live in a married or single state; but, that those who are not married, are bound to live in great purity

rity and continency. III. That husbands and wives ought not to separate from each other; but, on the contrary, are to live peaceably together, and to edify each other; by endeavouring to promote the salvation of one another. IV. That God having thought fit there should be different states and conditions in the world, every one ought to continue in his calling, provided it be a lawful one, and faithfully discharge all the duties in which his calling engages him, without endeavouring to alter his condition by sinful methods. V. That persons who do not marry have several advantages over others, provided they live in chastity, since they may serve God with less distraction in such a state; and in times of persecution are more free and better able to discharge their duty; but that, whether people marry, or whether they live in celibacy, they ought to be pure and chaste both in body and mind. VI. Another useful instruction which St. *Paul* here gives us, and which is adapted to all seasons and all persons, is, that our lives are short, that our condition in this world is very uncertain, and all things here below are transitory and vain; for which reason we ought not to set our hearts upon them, but should possess all things as if we possessed them not; that *they that weep should be as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.*

CHAP. VIII.

ST. *Paul* examines the question proposed to him by the *Corinthians*, whether it was lawful for Christians to eat of things that had been offered to idols, and to be present at the feast of the heathens in the temples of their false gods; To which he answers, I. That Christians know very well there is but one God, and that idols are lifeless and vain, and could not defile the meats offered to them, and therefore

fore that it was lawful to eat even of meats offered to idols. Nevertheless the apostle observes, that, all had not the same degree of knowledge in this particular; and therefore, II. He warns those Christians who were most knowing, not to abuse their liberty in this point, for fear they should, by eating things offered to idols, give offence to weak Christians, and occasion them to sin by eating contrary to the dictates of their conscience, and even to fall into idolatry.

REFLECTIONS.

THOUGH we have no need to be informed at this time of the use of things sacrificed to idols, since the idolatry of the heathens is abolished, and we all know that there is but one God, and that idols are nothing; yet that does not hinder, but the doctrine which St. *Paul* lays down in this chapter, may be of general use. He teaches us here, that all Christians, and especially those who are best instructed, should have a great regard to those that are not so well informed, and carefully avoid giving them scandal. The apostle further informs us, that we may offend our neighbour, not only by actions directly criminal, but likewise by such as are lawful; for which reason we ought to behave with great circumspection and prudence in the use of those things, and not always do what is lawful. He shews us likewise, that it is a great sin to give scandal to any one, since thereby we may be the occasion of our neighbour's destruction, and may be extremely guilty even against *Christ* himself. These rules are of great use, and ought to be continually remembered, that we may do nothing, even in things lawful, which may offend God, wound our conscience, or occasion our neighbour to sin.

CHAP. IX.

ST. *Paul's* design in this chapter, is to confirm, by his example, what he had taught in the foregoing;

going; namely, that when the edification of our neighbour may be promoted by it, we ought to abstain even from things lawful. In this view he does three things: I. He asserts his right as an apostle, to a stipend for his support. II. He adds, that he had not made use of his right, but shewn great condescension towards all, accommodating himself to the scruples of the weak, for fear of creating in them an aversion to the Gospel. III. He exhorts the *Corinthians* to imitate him, and to forego the use of lawful things, when the edification of their neighbour, and the salvation of their own souls require it. And to engage them so to do, he proposes the example of those who formerly strove in the public games of *Greece*, and who lived in great abstemiousness, abstaining from every thing contrary to the way of life they had engaged in.

REFLECTIONS.

THE general design of this chapter is to teach us, that we must not always do what is lawful, and what we may have a right to do; but that we ought to abstain from such a right, when the glory of God and the salvation of our neighbour require it; and that it is the duty of Christians to accommodate themselves as much as possible to all, to have always a regard to the edification of others, and particularly the weak, in order to bring them to the faith. Besides this general doctrine, which is of singular use, we have here some particular instructions, the chief of which are the three following: I. That Christian churches are obliged by the divine law, and by the command of *Jesus Christ*, to provide for the maintenance and support of pastors and their families. II. That the ministers of the Gospel, in imitation of *St. Paul*, ought to behave with much prudence and charity, disregarding their own private interest, and adapting themselves to mens weakness, and endeavouring by all means to gain to *Christ* as many souls

as they can. III. That we cannot discharge the duties of our Christian calling, without living in great temperance; that to that end we must mortify our bodies, bring them into subjection by abstinence and labour; avoiding idleness, luxury, and every thing that indulges too much the flesh, and pursuing such a kind of life as is conformable to the precepts of the Gospel, and the example of *Christ* and his apostles; that by these means we may obtain the glorious reward which is reserved for all those only that shall carefully discharge these duties.

CHAP. X

THE apostle continuing the subject he had been treating of in the two preceding chapters, touching the use of meats sacrificed to idols, represents here to the *Corinthians*, I. That though the ancient *Israelites* were the people of God, and enjoyed advantages like those which Christians now do, yet they had been drawn away to idolatry and impurity, by being present at the idolatrous feasts; and that by their sensuality and frequent rebellions they had brought upon themselves the judgments of God. He proposes these examples to the *Corinthians*, and particularly to those who think themselves least in danger, and most knowing in their duty, to prevent their going to the idolatrous feasts, for fear of exposing themselves to temptation, and falling into idolatry. II. In confirmation of this point, he adds further, that the use of the Lord's Supper, whereby Christians partake together of the sacrifice of *Jesus Christ*, by drinking of the consecrated cup, and eating all of the same bread, did not allow them to assist at the entertainments which the pagans made in honour of their idols, since that would be partaking of their sacrifices, and having fellowship with devils and idolators which must necessarily expose them to divine vengeance. III. He concludes that Christians might buy and eat of all kinds of meats, and in private eat of any thing that is
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set before them, unless they were told that such meats had been sacrificed to idols; in which case they ought to forbear, not because it was sinful to eat thereof, but to avoid giving scandal to those who informed them of it. He continues this subject with exhorting the *Corinthians* to regard in all things the glory of God, and the edification of their neighbours.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT has been said in this chapter obliges us to consider, I. That if the ancient *Jews* were punished so severely for having abused the favour God had granted them, we shall be punished much more severely, if we abuse those that we have received, since they are infinitely more excellent. II. The example of the *Israelites*, who, by being present at the feasts of idolators, fell into impurity and idolatry, and the divine vengeance for so doing, is a warning to us, as St. *Paul* says, to avoid all occasions of sin, and particularly to shun all sensuality and uncleanness, lest, if we suffer ourselves to be carried away by them, we be exposed to the judgments of God. III. We ought to consider, that if St. *Paul* asserts, that Christians might not partake of the table of the Lord, and at the same time eat of that which was sacrificed to idols, the participation of the Lord's Supper is not less incompatible with a carnal and corrupt life; and that the public and solemn commemoration which we make in this sacrament of the sacrifice of *Jesus Christ*, does indispensibly oblige us to lead a pure and holy life. IV. Let us carefully retain this general doctrine, that in all our actions, even in those that are indifferent and lawful, we ought always to have in view the glory of God, and the edification of our neighbour, as St. *Paul* directs by the rule which he gives us: *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*

CHAP. XI.

THIS chapter, in which *St. Paul* reproves the *Corinthians* for the disorders committed at their religious meetings, consists of two parts: I. In the first, he prescribes the manner in which men and women should behave in the church; he ordains that the men should have their head uncovered, when speaking of divine things; but that the women should cover their head; and what he says is founded upon the rules of decency, which required that women should not appear in public without being veiled, and their head covered, which was likewise the custom of the *Jews*, and other people in that age. II. In the second part, he reproves the *Corinthians* for their irreverence and disorder in celebrating the Lord's Supper, after their feasts of charity; and to induce them to correct those abuses, he relates the institution of this sacrament; he shews the use that should be made of it, and tells the *Corinthians*, that it was for the punishment of their indevotion in the participation of it, that several of them were afflicted with sicknesses, and some were dead.

REFLECTIONS.

THE directions *St. Paul* gave the *Corinthians* upon what passed in their assemblies, instruct us in general, that order, gravity, and decency, ought to be observed in religious assemblies; and particularly that women ought to appear there with respect, and in such a manner as may denote the submission, humility and modesty proper to their sex. In the next place, we should make the most serious reflections upon what *St. Paul* says here, concerning the Lord's Supper, and its use: It appears by this chapter, I. That this Sacrament is a solemn institution of our blessed Redeemer; and that, in the time of *St. Paul*, it was celebrated in all the Christian churches. II. That the end for which *Christ* appointed this holy Supper,

was to be a memorial of his death, until his coming again at the last day. III. That we ought to celebrate this Sacrament with very great reverence; that we should examine ourselves before we come to it; that those who do not so, and who partake of it unworthily, are guilty of a very criminal contempt of *Christ* himself, and eat and drink their own condemnation. IV. And lastly, it is to be observed, that God punished the abuse of the Lord's Supper, in the time of the apostles, by sickness and death; which plainly proves, that this Sacrament is a most holy institution, and that those who profane it, either by rashness or hypocrisy, may expect a most severe condemnation.

CHAP. XII.

THE design of *St. Paul* in this chapter, is to instruct the *Corinthians* about the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and the use that is to be made of them, and to prevent divisions in the church upon that account; for which purpose he does two things. I. He takes notice, that as they had renounced heathen idolatry, God had poured on them the gift of the Holy Spirit; that God granted to the ministers of his church, and even to several of the believers of that time, divers extraordinary gifts; such as the gift of instructing others, of speaking and interpreting divers languages, of healing the sick, of prophecy, and the like; that all these gifts proceeded from the same author; but that they were different, and that all those who had received the spirit of God, did not possess the same gifts, nor in the same degree. II. He shews that these gifts proceeded all from the same Spirit, and since believers composed together but one body, they ought to be employed to the common advantage and edification of the church. This *St. Paul* illustrates by the comparison of a human body; and observes, that although all the members have not the same functions, nor the same dignity, they are notwithstanding all necessary, and do all contribute to the good

good of the body. By this *St. Paul* would convince the *Corinthians*, that these gifts of the Holy Ghost, which were given them for the public good, and to unite them to each other, should not be the occasion of divisions among them.

REFLECTIONS.

THAT we may improve by this chapter, it must be observed, I. That the miraculous gifts which were formerly in the church, were an undeniable proof of the divinity of the Christian Religion, and a very effectual means to confirm Christians in the faith, and convert both *Jews* and Gentiles. For though these extraordinary gifts are not to be met with now, it appears from this chapter, that they were bestowed by God on Christians, in the time of the apostles, since *St. Paul* speaks of them as a thing well known at that time by every body, and very common in the church. II. What *St. Paul* says of these miraculous gifts, we should apply to the ordinary gifts of the spirit of God, and learn, that all spiritual gifts and graces proceed from the Holy Ghost; that God bestows them upon men in a different degree, both for their own salvation, and the good of their brethren; and, as we compose but one body, we ought to apply all the gifts we have received to one and the same end, which is, to the common edification and benefit of the church, and to live in perfect union and harmony, each of us being contented with that measure of grace which God has been pleased to distribute to us, and possessing it with humility. Lastly, *St. Paul* shews, that there are gifts more excellent, and more useful in their nature, than the miraculous ones before mentioned, namely, those of true faith and charity, of which he treats in the following chapter; these are therefore the gifts which we ought most earnestly to seek after.

CHAP. XIII.

I. **ST. Paul** having treated of miraculous and supernatural gifts, teaches, that how great and excellent soever these are, they are of no value without charity. II. He afterwards describes the nature and characters of this virtue, proves that it prevents divisions, jealousies, pride, provoking one another, and suspicions; and this he says, because these vices reigned among the *Corinthians*. III. And lastly, He shews, that charity is the chief of all virtues, because miraculous gifts were not always to remain in the church, whereas charity is never to have an end, here nor hereafter.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter, which treats of charity, ought to be continually meditated on by all Christians. *St. Paul* here shews the nature and excellency of this virtue. He proves the excellency of it on these two accounts: I. That without charity, that is to say, without a sincere love of our neighbour, without a spirit of peace, unity, and meekness, all other gifts, even those which are most excellent, such as the gift of tongues and of miracles, are unprofitable, and worth nothing in the sight of God. II. That this is a virtue which will last for ever, and which will render us perfect in heaven, as it does upon earth, whereas miraculous gifts shall cease. The apostle instructs us next in the nature of charity. He says, that those persons who are endowed with this virtue, are neither envious nor haughty, nor suspicious, nor self-interested, nor peevish, nor quarrelsome; but that they are patient, meek, peaceable; that they judge charitable of their neighbour; that they do good; that they bear all things. This description of charity, and its several effects, plainly proves that charity is the sum of all other virtues, and the true way to discharge all the duties of Christianity.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIV.

I. **ST. Paul** continues to speak of miraculous gifts, and particularly of the gift of speaking divers languages; and says, that of all spiritual gifts which God vouchsafed to particular persons, that of prophecy, that is to say, the gift of teaching, exhorting, and explaining Scripture, was of most service in the edification of the church. This he confirms, by observing how useless, and even absurd it was, to speak strange languages, if those who heard did not understand them. II. He orders next, that those who speak those languages, or who had any revelation, should proceed in order, and after one another, and that there should always be somebody to interpret what they said; he directs farther, that women should keep silence in the church; and that all should be done with decency and order.

REFLECTIONS.

THOUGH the gift of speaking divers languages is ceased in the church, and there be no revelations at present, as there were in the time of the apostles, yet we may gather from this chapter the following important instructions: I. That these extraordinary gifts were, as *St. Paul* says, a strong proof of the truth of the Gospel. II. That however excellent such gifts were, they were of no advantage, unless applied to the instruction and edification of the whole church, which ought always to be the great end of religion. III. That it is of the utmost moment, and absolutely necessary, to communicate to the people a clear knowledge of the truths which God has revealed to us, and for that purpose, to explain the Scripture familiarly and intelligibly; that accordingly, the reading of the Bible, exhortations, prayers, psalmody, celebration of divine service, and in general, every thing that is done in the church, ought to be performed in a language which the common people understand, and
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in a plain and simple manner, and suited to every capacity. IV. And lastly, We ought carefully to attend to the rule *St. Paul* lays down throughout this whole chapter, and particularly in the last verse, where he says, that God is not a God of confusion, but a God of order and peace; and that all things ought to be done in the church with decency, order, and gravity. It appears from hence, that what relates to the external part of religion, and the service of God, is not a matter of indifference; and that it is the will of God, that order, decency, and uniformity be observed in all Christian churches.

CHAP. XV. 1—34.

ST. *Paul* proves in this chapter the resurrection of the dead, against certain persons who denied this doctrine. For which purpose he lays down, I. That our Lord *Jesus Christ* is risen from the dead; which he proves by the testimony of the apostles, and several other persons. II. He infers from thence, that the dead shall rise again, which he illustrates and confirms by several other arguments.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter is an excellent discourse, in which the doctrine of the resurrection is fully explained. *St. Paul* teaches us, I. That the whole Christian Religion is founded upon the resurrection of *Jesus Christ*, and that this resurrection is a certain and undoubted fact, attested by the apostles themselves, whose evidence cannot be questioned. II. *St. Paul* shews, that the dead will infallibly rise again, and the proofs alledged by him are the following: That if the dead were not to be raised, *Christ* would not have risen, and our faith would be vain; that the faithful, who are dead in the Lord, would perish for ever; that Christians would be the most miserable of all men, by reason of the persecutions to which they were exposed; and that the evil which *Adam* has brought upon us by subjecting
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us to death, would not otherwise be remedied. He farther observes, that *Christ* could not be said fully to reign over all things, if by raising us he did not destroy death, which is our last enemy; and finally, that if there was no such thing as the resurrection, it would be a great folly for Christians voluntarily to expose themselves to all the evils which they did undergo. All these considerations prove the certainty of the resurrection at the last day; and let us return thanks to God for having built the hopes of our resurrection upon such a sure foundation; and labour to be confirmed more and more in this hope; taking heed, as *St. Paul* exhorts, that the words and examples of the impious and profane do not stagger our faith, and studying to live a holy and unblameable life.

CHAP. XV. 35—58.

ST. Paul, after having proved the resurrection of the dead, shews, I. That although our bodies are destroyed by death, they will be restored to life, and that then they will be no longer corruptible, weak, and mortal, as they now are, but incorruptible, immortal, and glorious; which he explains by the comparison of grain that is sown, and by some other resemblances. II. He speaks next of the change that will happen to those who shall be living at the time of the resurrection. And, III. concludes, by describing those sentiments of joy and piety, which the belief of the resurrection ought to inspire all true Christians with.

REFLECTIONS.

ST. Paul's design is, to teach us, that although death destroys our bodies, and reduces them to dust, they will nevertheless be raised again by the almighty power of our Lord; and that the bodies thus raised, will be incorruptible and glorious, inasmuch that true believers shall all be then like *Jesus Christ*. Besides this, we see that those who shall be alive at the end of the

the world, will be changed in an instant; and that accordingly all the faithful will become immortal. The expectation of this great glory, which is reserved for us, ought to fill us with hope and joy; to dissipate entirely the terrors of death, and to make us say with *St. Paul*, *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.* But the hope of this resurrection of our bodies, does likewise oblige us to preserve them in great purity, and to practise continually all the duties of Christianity; this is what *St. Paul* exhorts us to do in these words, which shew the use we should make of this doctrine: *Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

CHAP. XVI.

I. **T**HE apostle exhorts the *Corinthians* to contribute to a collection that was making for the churches of *Judea*. II. He promises to come to see them in a little time. III. He recommends to them *Timothy*, and some other persons. IV. He concludes with salutations and good wishes, and by declaring, that those who did not love the Lord *Jesus Christ* sincerely, were exposed to the judgment of God, and ought not to be looked upon as members of the church.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WE are to observe, in the first part of this chapter, *St. Paul's* exhortations to the *Corinthians*, to engage them to assist the churches of *Judea*, for which there was a collection making, and to lay apart something on that account every first day of the week. This is a lesson to us, that every one ought to give alms according to his ability, as often as there is a proper occasion; and that the first day of the week, or Sunday, was, from that time particularly dedicated to works of piety and charity. II. The manner
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in which St. *Paul* recommends *Timothy*, and some other zealous and godly persons, teaches us, that we ought to have in great reverence the true ministers of the Lord, who have devoted themselves to his service, and submit to them. III. The salutations we read at the end of this epistle, shew, that there ought to be a most strict communion among the churches and Christians of all parts, leading them to love one another affectionately; and especially that God's ministers ought to pray without ceasing for all the faithful, wishing them an increase of the grace of our Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ*. Finally, We ought to give a very particular attention to the anathema which St. *Paul* denounces against all those that do not love *Christ* sincerely. He threatens them with a curse of God, and forbids us to look upon such as Christians. This denotes plainly, that it is the duty of the Church to excommunicate scandalous and profane persons; and that all such as have not a true love for our Saviour, and who neglect to keep his commandments, do by no means belong to him, but remain under the curse of God.

*The End of the first Epistle of St. PAUL to the
CORINTHIANS.*

THE
SECOND EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL
TO THE
CORINTHIANS.

ARGUMENT.

This second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, was writ about the fifty-sixth year of our Lord. The principal design of the apostle in this Epistle, is to defend his ministry against those who disparaged it among the Corinthians.

CHAP. I.

AFTER the salutation, St. Paul speaks in this chapter, I. Of the persecutions he had been exposed to in Asia, at Ephesus, and from which God had delivered him by a kind of miracle. II. He tells the Corinthians, in the next place, that if he had not come to see them, as he had promised, it did not proceed from levity or inconstancy, or want of kindness towards them; but that he had delayed his journey, that he might not be obliged to reprove and chastise them for the disorders that prevailed in their church.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

WHAT St. *Paul* says in the beginning of this epistle of his sufferings, as well as of the assistance and comfort which God had afforded him under them, teaches us. I. That the faithful are sometimes exposed to great dangers, and extreme afflictions, but that God supports and strengthens them in such a state, and at length graciously delivers them. II. That these afflictions produce very happy effects, not only in the joy of those who are afflicted, but likewise in the edification of their brethren ; since those who have thus suffered, are better able to comfort and encourage others in any trouble or affliction. III. As St. *Paul* always desires to be assisted with the prayers of the *Corinthians*, we have reason to conclude that the mutual prayers of the faithful do greatly contribute to obtain from God deliverance from danger, comfort, and all the graces we stand in need of. The second part of this chapter suggests two remarks upon St. *Paul's* conduct. I. The sincerity of his behaviour towards the *Corinthians* in particular ; and, II. His meekness and prudence in deferring his journey to them, that he might spare them. Such should be the character of *Christ's* ministers. As the master whom they profess to serve is love and truth itself, they ought to behave with sincerity and candour, and particularly to avoid every thing that favours of levity and inconsistency, that so they may thereby approve themselves both to God and man. And on the other hand, to spare sinners as much as they can, giving them time to repent, and never making use of severity till it becomes absolutely necessary, and cannot be avoided.

CHAP. II.

I. ST. *Paul* tells the *Corinthians*, that it was to spare them, and that he might not have the sorrow of reproving them for their irregularities, that he forbore going to *Corinth* ; and he orders them to receive into the

the peace of the church the incestuous person that had been excommunicated, mentioned in the former Epistle, because he had repented. II. He acquaints them with some of his travels, and upon that occasion speaks of the efficacy and fruits of his ministry.

REFLECTIONS.

I. ST. *Paul* shews in this chapter the most tender regard for the *Corinthians*, and great charity even to that enormous sinner whom he had delivered to Satan, but who had afterwards repented. These kind and affectionate sentiments of St. *Paul*, may serve for a rule to pastors, and inspire them with a tender love for their flocks, and particularly for the greatest sinners. It is matter of great grief to the ministers of *Christ*, when they are forced to use severity, and the greatest joy when they observe sinners returning from the error of their ways. After the apostle had reproved the church of *Corinth* for not excommunicating the incestuous person, and had actually excommunicated him himself, he orders him again to be received into the church, and to be forgiven, because the punishment had worked a thorough repentance and reformation in him. This is that just mixture of severity and candour, which should be observed in the exercise of discipline, not suffering scandalous offenders to continue in communion with the church, but at the same time being ready to receive them again with joy and gladness, as soon as they are humbled, and have given sufficient proofs of their reformation. II. St. *Paul's* thankfulness to God for the glorious success of his ministry, is a proof of his humility as well as of his great zeal. The true ministers of *Christ* have no greater joy, than that of making known the will of God to men; and always attribute to God alone, and to the efficacy of his grace, the good success they meet with. III. The last verses of this chapter teach us, that the preaching of the Gospel does not produce the same effect in all; that it is to some a favour of death,

death, that is to say, an occasion of condemnation, since by rejecting this Gospel they become more wicked, and aggravate their punishment; but to others it is a favour of life, that is to say, an efficacious means to bring them to a spiritual life, and to salvation.

CHAP. III.

I. *St. Paul* represents to the *Corinthians*, that their conversion to the Christian Religion was a sufficient proof of his calling, and that he stood in need of no other recommendation to them, than the testimony of their conscience, and the gifts of the holy Spirit, which had been bestowed on them abundantly; but he acknowledges at the same time, that the efficacy of his ministry proceeded only from God. II. He shews in the next place, that the ministry of the Gospel is much more excellent than that of the law, forasmuch as this last was imperfect, incapable of giving life, and was not to continue always; whereas that of the Gospel was spiritual and eternal, giving life. From whence *St. Paul* concludes, that those who adhered to the ceremonies and law of *Moses*, remained in ignorance and misery; and that none but those who cleave to the Gospel are truly enlightened, and enjoy the glorious liberty of the Sons of God. The apostle says all this to defend himself against certain teachers that opposed him, and made a shew of great zeal for the law of *Moses*.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter teaches us, I. That the greatest glory of the ministers of *Jesus Christ*, and what recommends them in the sight of God and man, is the fruits of their preaching, and the share they have in the love and affection of Christians. II. That they ought not to presume on their own strength, nor ascribe to themselves the success of their ministry; but that the honour of it is due to God alone. III. That the Gospel is much more excellent than the law, and its ministry

ministry infinitely more glorious than that of *Moses*, since the Christian Doctrine gives us a much more perfect knowledge of the will of God by *Jesus Christ*, making us partakers of the true liberty and glory of the Lord himself, by sanctifying our natures, and giving us a sure and joyful hope of immortality. From whence it follows, that if there be any who do not believe, it proceeds from wilful blindness; that we ought to esteem this Gospel above all things, and that those who preach it, and those who make profession of it, ought to do it openly and sincerely, and without shame, as *St. Paul* will shew us in the following chapter.

CHAP. IV.

I. THE apostle continues to speak of his courage and sincerity in the exercise of his ministry; but observes, that there were some who did not believe the Gospel, wilfully shutting their eyes against that divine light which should guide them. **II.** He says farther, that he himself, and other ministers, being weak men, the efficacy of their preaching did not proceed from themselves, but came from God alone. He mentions likewise, the persecutions and sufferings to which he was exposed; and says, that faith in *Christ*, the hopes of the resurrection, and the firm expectation of eternal glory, made him not lose courage, but undergo all these evils with perseverance, and even with joy.

REFLECTIONS.

THE considerations which occur to us here, are the following: **I.** That the ministers of *Jesus Christ* ought to put away all artifice and dissimulation, and to speak always freely and sincerely, as in the presence of God, seeking only to make manifest the truth in the consciences of all men. **II.** That if there are any who are not sanctified and enlightened by the Gospel, but remain in unbelief, it is wholly their own fault, because the love of this world has blinded them. **III.** That the servants of God, and all Christians, ought to bear

bear with courage the severest afflictions, since they tend to the edification of the church, and since we know that those who partake of the sufferings of *Jesus Christ*, shall likewise partake of his resurrection, life and glory. IV. That the afflictions of this life can only hurt the body, but give new life and vigour to the soul; that they are but light, and of short duration, and work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. But if we would make all this advantage of afflictions, and not sink under them, we must judge of afflictions by the light of faith, not looking at the things which are seen, and are temporal, but at the things which are not seen, which are eternal.

CHAP. V.

I. **THE** apostle continues the discourse he had begun concerning the afflictions he underwent, and comfort he received from the hope of the resurrection and a better life; he speaks of the happiness which the faithful shall enjoy after death; and says, that the consideration of that happiness, and of the last judgment, made him earnestly desire to leave this world, to be with the Lord; and that in this expectation, he suffered afflictions with courage, and laboured to become acceptable to God, by faithfully discharging his duty. II. He begins again to discourse about his ministry, and says, that his only aim was to bring men to the faith; which he thought a sufficient proof of the honour of his apostleship against his adversaries; adding, that the love of *Jesus Christ*, who died for all men, was a strong motive to him, to live only for the edification of the faithful. Lastly, He declares, he had no regard to external things, such as the advantages which the *Jews* enjoyed over the Gentiles, and so much boasted of. And that as God had united both *Jews* and Gentiles, reconciling all men in *Christ Jesus*, he had no other design in his ministry than to bring men to God, and make them become new creatures.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter contains very comfortable and useful instructions. We see here, I. That the faithful know and believe assuredly, that though the body be destroyed by death, yet there is another more happy state, and never-fading glory, prepared for them; and that when they leave this body they will be with the Lord. This hope, full of comfort and glory, supports them in their afflictions and trials, and continually animates them to a holy life. II. St. *Paul* teaches us in this chapter, that *We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad*; and shews, that the use to be made of this doctrine is, to live in the fear of the Lord, studying to render ourselves acceptable to him at all times and in all places, and to inspire others with the same sentiments. III. The apostle proposes another very powerful motive to the discharge of these duties, when he adds, that the great love which *Christ* has shewn us, in dying for our salvation, is a most pressing argument, if we understand it rightly, to live no longer to ourselves, but to employ our whole life for the edification of our brethren, and to the glory of him who died and rose again for us. Lastly, Since the design of the ministry of the Gospel is, as St. *Paul* teaches, to make men become new creatures, and to reconcile them to God by *Jesus Christ*; all those who pretend to call themselves Christians, ought to set a high value upon this Gospel, and zealously improve the means which God offers them to be reconciled with him, and to endeavour to wean themselves from the things of this world, to become new creatures, by regeneration and a constant application to holiness.

CHAP. VI.

To which add the first verse of Chap. VII.

THIS chapter consists of two parts : I. The apostle says, that he had endeavoured to discharge his ministry with integrity, zeal, charity, and patience, in the midst of the afflictions and disgraces to which he had been exposed ; and he conjures the *Corinthians* to make suitable returns to his great zeal and fervent love towards them. II. He exhorts them to imitate his zeal and sincerity, by making a pure profession of Christianity, avoiding all intercourse with idolators, either by marriage, or by being present at their worship, and partaking of their feasts ; and by becoming pure both in body and soul.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WE have in this chapter a remarkable description of those virtues which ought to adorn the ministers of the Gospel. *St. Paul* teaches them, by his own example, to discharge their office with fidelity ; to behave in such a manner, as to give no offence ; nor to dishonour their ministry, but to make it honourable by the purity of their life, by a sincere and open profession of the truth, by a perfect charity, by meekness, by humility and patience in affliction. These are the virtues which do honour to the ministers of *Christ*, and add great weight to the Gospel they preach. II. We learn in the second place, that as pastors ought entirely to devote themselves to the service of the church, and be full of tender love for those committed to their charge, so these ought to make suitable returns, and to love them no less sincerely in the Lord. III. As *St. Paul* forbids the *Corinthians* to have to do with idolators, so neither is it lawful for Christians to associate themselves with carnal men, and to join a worldly life to the profession of the Gospel. Because there can be no agreement between righteousness and

unrighteousness, between light and darkness; we ought therefore to avoid correspondence with worldly men, to withdraw ourselves from them, and to have no share in their sins; *to cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.* This we are engaged to by the great and precious promises God has made us of being our God and father, and looking upon us as his people, his children, and heirs of the promises.

CHAP. VII.

I. *St. Paul* exhorts the *Corinthians* to entertain the same affection for him as he had for them. II. He expresses his great joy at hearing, by *Titus*, the effect of his Epistle with respect to the incestuous person; from whence he takes occasion to speak of the nature and effects of true repentance.

REFLECTIONS.

WE must make the following remarks upon this chapter: I. That there ought to be a great love, and mutual tenderness between pastors and their flocks; such for instance as *St. Paul* had conceived for the *Corinthians*, and which he wished they might have for him. II. The manner of the *Corinthians* receiving *Titus*, and the effect which *St. Paul's* reproofs produced in them, teach us, that churches ought to receive with love and confidence the faithful ministers of the Lord, and submit to their corrections and remonstrances. III. *St. Paul's* great joy upon *Titus's* informing him of the happy state of the church of *Corinth*, shews, that the greatest happiness pastors can enjoy, is to see the good effects of their ministry, and have proofs of their peoples affection. Lastly, This chapter instructs us in the nature of true repentance. *St. Paul* says, there is a worldly sorrow, a sorrow which is owing to the love of the world, and a regard to things temporal, which is not attended with a sincere change, and only produces death; whereas

whereas godly sorrow is attended with peace, and unspeakable comfort, and produces the most happy effects; since it fills those who are affected with it with a lively sorrow, and just indignation against themselves, inspiring them with fear and zeal, and leading them to repair, as much as possible, the evil they have done.

CHAP. VIII.

I. THE apostle informs the *Corinthians* of the liberality which the churches of *Macedonia* had shewn in a collection made for the churches of *Jerusalem*. II. He exhorts them to imitate their example, and finish the collection which had been begun the year before; and tells them, that he sent them for that purpose *Titus*, and another person, which was probably *St. Luke*.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter furnishes us with divers instructions about alms: I. The first is, that Christians are obliged to exercise charity as often as they meet with an occasion, and are able to do it, especially when it is to assist their brethren. *St. Paul* says upon this subject, that persons who have devoted themselves to God, and are well instructed in the grace of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, do always discharge this duty with pleasure. II. The example of the churches of *Macedonia*, which the apostle proposes to the *Corinthians*, shews, that such as exercise charity do very great service, since they not only relieve the necessitous, but likewise set a good pattern to the whole church, and stir up others to imitate the same. III. That in works of charity, God regards chiefly the readiness and good will with which it is performed. IV. That charity ought to be done in a just proportion, so that every one may contribute according to his power, and that some be not more burdened than others; and that it is but reasonable that those who have been

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relieved,

relieved, should likewise assist others in their turn. V. And lastly, the great precaution that *St. Paul* uses in the distribution of collections, that nobody might blame him, and the care he takes to put them into the hands of faithful and approved persons, shew, that we ought to administer charity with a very great integrity and prudence; and that they who have the care of distributing the alms of the faithful, ought to do it in such a manner as to leave no room for reproach, nor even, if possible, for the least suspicion.

CHAP. IX.

I. *St. Paul* continues to exhort the *Corinthians* to assist the churches of *Judea*, and to do it bountifully and freely. II. And that he may engage them to this duty, he sets before them the blessing that charitable persons are to expect from God; and the good effects which the exercise of charity produces, to the glory of God, and the edification of the church.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter treats of alms and charity as well as the foregoing, and the apostle proposes here particularly three things, viz. The manner of giving alms; the reward of the charitable; and the good effects that charity produces. I. As to the manner, *St. Paul* says, that in order to please God, we must give as much as we are able, with chearfulness and liberality, because *God loves a chearful giver*. II. The promises he makes the *Corinthians*, do not suffer us to doubt but God will reward the beneficent and charitable, even with temporal blessings, by increasing their substance in such a manner, that they may always have not only what is necessary for themselves, but likewise sufficient to assist such as are in want. III. We ought likewise seriously to consider the good effects which charity produces; it rejoices the saints, comforts the afflicted, engages them to praise God, edifies

edifies the church, and gives many people, seeing the liberality of Christians, occasion to glorify God's holy name, to pray for the charitable persons, and to imitate them; all which contributes greatly to promote the Gospel. These considerations should stir us up to charity; and it is particularly the duty of those to whom God has given the good things of this life, to improve what St. *Paul* says in this and the foregoing chapter.

CHAP. X.

THE design of St. *Paul* in this chapter and the following, is to defend himself against those who endeavoured to lessen his authority, and to render him contemptible to the *Corinthians*. It is with this view he speaks, I. Of the spiritual power God had given him, and the use he made of it for the edification of the church. II. He then declares, that he was not full of pride, like those who spoke evil of him; that he did not pretend to meddle with other mens labours, nor take the honour of them to himself; but was contented with that proportion of grace which God had bestowed on him; and moreover, that he hoped, as he had first preached the Gospel at *Corinth*, he should likewise go and preach it in distant countries, where it had not yet been preached.

REFLECTIONS.

THE care that St. *Paul* takes to justify and defend himself against such as blamed him, and what he says concerning his authority, and the spiritual power God had given him, shews, that it is lawful to maintain one's innocence, provided it be done with moderation, and for a good end. It proves, particularly, that although the servants of God ought to be entirely free from pride, yet they are allowed, and even obliged to assert the honour of their ministry; to make use of the authority they have received from *Christ* agreeable to his intentions; resolutely with-
standing

standing all those who would obstruct the edification of the church, and having in view, not their own glory or interest, but the promoting God's kingdom, the removing every thing that may oppose the knowledge of him, and the engaging mens hearts to the obedience of *Christ*. We are also taught hereby, that Christians ought to reverence their pastors, and submit to their authority, since they likewise have their commission from *Jesus Christ*; and though they are much inferior to the apostles, yet the Lord has appointed them to rule his church. Lastly, The manner in which St. *Paul* speaks of himself, and the remarks he makes upon the pride of those teachers who opposed him, should make us own, that humility is the character of the true ministers of *Christ*, that they ought to confine themselves within the bounds of their vocation, and the duties to which they are called; and that it is a great misfortune to the church, when its ministers are animated with a spirit of pride, presumption, envy, and jealousy; and when they occasion strife and divisions.

CHAP. XI.

I. ST. *Paul* tells the *Corinthians*, that the great love he had for them, and his fear lest they should be seduced by those who endeavoured to villify him, compelled him to make mention, though against his will, of the gifts and graces wherewith God had enriched him, and of what he had done for them. II. He puts them in mind, that he had preached the Gospel to them without receiving any thing from them; which was more than the false apostles could say: that so he might not give them the least occasion against him. III. He shews, that he might boast of his superiority over those false apostles, who were *Jews*, on account of his great labours and sufferings, of which he gives us here a very remarkable catalogue.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may observe in general in this chapter that *St. Paul* maintains the honour of his apostleship, but does it in a very humble manner; and that though he speaks in his own praise, yet his manner of doing it sufficiently shews that he was forced to it. From hence we may conclude, I. That we ought always to speak of ourselves with great modesty; that modesty and humility ought particularly to be found in the ministers of *Jesus Christ*; but that they may nevertheless assert their own innocency, and the honour of their ministry, when it is necessary for public edification. II. *St. Paul's* fear lest the *Corinthians* should suffer themselves to be drawn aside from the purity and simplicity of the Gospel by false teachers, and his observing that the ministers of Satan transform themselves into angels of light, is a warning to Christians to be upon their guard, and carefully to distinguish doctrines and the propagators of them, and not suffer themselves to be surprized by the false appearances of piety and zeal. III. We have seen that *St. Paul* would receive no stipend from the *Corinthians*, though he loved them, and was beloved by them; this he did to take away every pretence from those who sought occasion to render his conduct suspected, and to shew that he was not like the false apostles, who railed at him, and were themselves mercenary. This is an example of zeal, prudence, and disinterestedness, which ought to be imitated by all pastors, and adds great weight to their ministry, and to all their offices. IV. We should seriously attend to the account which the apostle here gives of his great sufferings, and of the many dangers and persecutions he had been exposed to, and from which God had delivered him. This is a noble proof of his zeal and sincerity, and of the truth of the doctrine he preached; it likewise shews, that Christians ought not to be terrified at afflictions, especially the ministers of *Jesus Christ*.

Christ. Lastly, *St. Paul* informs us, that besides the sufferings he endured in his own person, he was continually in care for the churches; and that no evil could befall them, but what afflicted, and as it were consumed him. Such is the spirit of all true pastors in the duties of the ministry; the care of souls, and the several wants of the people, engage their attention and their concern night and day, and they are more earnest in promoting the edification of the church than in any other thing.

CHAP. XII.

I. *St. Paul* continues to speak of the advantages that distinguished him from other ministers: relates how he was caught up to heaven; but does it in an exceeding humble and modest manner; by which it appears, he would not have mentioned it, if he had not been as it were forced to it. II. After this he tells the *Corinthians* he would shortly come to them; and as he had not been, so neither would he now be burthensome to them; he expresses a most tender regard for them, declaring he would not have writ to them as he did, but for their edification, and that he might not be obliged to use them with severity when he came to *Corinth*.

REFLECTIONS.

St. Paul's being caught up into heaven, mentioned in this chapter, was a glorious privilege of this apostle, demonstrating the divinity of his vocation, and at the same time, that there is a glorious and immortal life prepared for the faithful in heaven. The way in which *St. Paul* relates this matter, and the excuses he makes in giving the relation of it, shew, that we may be allowed to speak of the favours God has bestowed on us; but that we must not do it unless it be necessary for the glory of God, and always in an humble sense of our own unworthiness, but by no means in a way of boasting or extolling ourselves.

ourselves. The apostle says, God has put a thorn in his flesh, that he might not be puffed up on account of the revelations he had had when he was caught up into paradise; and that a bad angel did, by the divine permission, cause him to feel very sensible pains in his body; this teaches us, that we are in danger of growing proud when we enjoy any considerable advantage; and that it is necessary God should visit even the best of men with afflictions, to mortify them and keep them humble. We have seen, that though *St. Paul* prayed earnestly to be delivered from this affliction, yet the Lord did not answer his request, and said unto him, *My grace is sufficient for thee.* God never fails to grant those who ask of him those things which are necessary for the good of the soul, and to obtain salvation; but he does not always hear the prayers in which we beg to be delivered from bodily evils; but his grace, which enables us to bear them, ought to satisfy us; and he leaves us exposed to sufferings, to the end we may become more sensible of his strength in our weakness. Lastly, *St. Paul* expresses the tender and paternal affection he bore to the *Corinthians*: he had nothing in view but their edification; he was ready to lay down his life for them; and was afraid he must be forced to use with severity those who had not repented. Such are the sentiments of all faithful pastors; they have a tender affection for their people, devote themselves wholly to their service, and it is always matter of grief to them to be forced to use the severity of ecclesiastical censures against scandalous and incorrigible sinners.

CHAP. XIII.

I. THE apostle acquaints the *Corinthians* again that he designed to visit them; that he would not spare those who had not amended their lives; and since some among them questioned his authority, he would make them know by experience, and by the effects, that as *Jesus Christ*, though he had been
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a weak man, now reigned by the power God; so likewise he himself, though he was looked upon as a weak and a despicable person, yet had received from the Lord the power and authority of an apostle of *Christ*. II. He exhorts them to examine and correct themselves, telling them he desired nothing so much as to find them in a good condition, that he might not be obliged to deal rigorously with them, though they should call in question his character as an apostle. III. He concludes with a general exhortation to amendment and peace, and with hearty prayers for them.

REFLECTIONS.

We may observe in this chapter the zeal, and at the same time the meekness, charity, and humility of *St. Paul*. This apostle was resolved not to spare the incorrigible; yet he wished the *Corinthians* might amend, and not force him to use the power he had received from *Christ* as an apostle. In imitation of him, the ministers of *Christ* ought to be animated with a spirit of charity and humility, and, as much as they can, to use meekness instead of severity. Nevertheless, they ought not to spare hardened sinners, when necessity requires it. It appears likewise from hence, that it is more laudable and pleasing to God, that Christians should do their duty willingly, and of their own accord, than to be compelled thereto by the severest censures of the church. *St. Paul* concludes this Epistle, exhorting the *Corinthians* to spiritual joy, to repentance and peace, in these expressions: *Finally, brethren, farewell; be ye perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace be with you.* This is the state which all Christians ought to aspire after, and be confirmed in more and more; and this too is the way to partake of God's love, of his peace, and of the effects of his mercy in *Jesus Christ* our Lord.

*The end of the Second Epistle of St. PAUL to the
CORINTHIANS.*

THE
EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL
TO THE
GALATIANS.

ARGUMENT.

In the Epistle to the Galatians, which was writ about the year of our Lord fifty-two, St. Paul opposes those who taught, that in order to be saved, it was not enough to believe in Jesus Christ, but it was likewise necessary to be circumcised, and to observe the ceremonies of the law of Moses. The apostle proves against these people, that Christians are justified by faith alone in Jesus Christ, without being obliged to the observation of those ceremonies. He afterwards exhorts the Galatians to continue in that liberty; but warns them not to abuse it, by falling into licentiousness.

CHAP. I.

I. **I**N this first chapter St. Paul, after the salutation, reproves the *Galatians* for departing from the doctrine which he had taught them, which was the only doctrine they ought to receive. II. He tells them in the next place, that he had received this doctrine

trine by the revelation of *Jesus Christ*, and not from any man; upon which occasion he puts them in mind how zealous he had been formerly for the ceremonies and traditions of the *Jews*: that he had even been a furious persecutor of the Christians, but that God had called him to the knowledge of the truth; and that immediately after his conversion, he had preached the Gospel in several places, without consulting any man, or any apostle. St. *Paul* speaks thus, to shew that he was called by *Christ* only, and not by St. *Peter*, nor by any other person; and that he had the same authority as the rest of the apostles, which the false teachers would not allow.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter presents us with two principal reflections. I. That Christians ought never to depart from the true doctrine of the Gospel, which was preached and committed to writing by the apostles; and that they ought to shun all those that would preach another doctrine, or propose any way to be saved but by faith in *Christ Jesus*. II. The account St. *Paul* gives of his conversion, and what he says to prove that he had his authority from *Jesus Christ*, obliges us, on one hand, to receive his doctrine as divine, and to submit to it; and, on the other, to acknowledge the mercy of the Lord, and the power of his grace, towards those who are in ignorance and error; of which we see an illustrious example in the conversion of St. *Paul*, and his being called to the office of an apostle, who, before that, had been a declared enemy of the Christian Religion.

CHAP. II.

I. ST. *Paul*, to support his calling and authority, and to shew that he was not inferior to any of the apostles, says, that not only his doctrine had been approved at *Jerusalem* by St. *Peter*, St. *James*, and St. *John*; but even that he had rebuked St. *Peter*, because
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out of too great complaisance for the *Jews*, he was afraid to eat with those Gentiles who had embraced the Gospel of *Christ*; which might have encouraged the *Jews* in their prejudices, and have given some reason to believe that the Gentiles were bound to submit to the ceremonies of the law of *Moses*. II. He teaches next, that both *Jews* and Gentiles are justified only by faith in *Jesus Christ*; but shews, at the same time, that this doctrine is so far from countenancing looseness of life, that, on the contrary, faith in *Christ* crucified withdraws men from sin, and engages them to lead a most spiritual life.

REFLECTIONS.

We have the two following observations to make upon this chapter: I. The authority, sincerity, and zeal, with which *St. Paul* preached the pure doctrine of the Gospel, so far as even to reprove *St. Peter* for his too great complaisance to the *Jews*, which induced him to avoid all correspondence with the Gentiles. This should convince all Christians, and especially the ministers of the Gospel, that they should act agreeable to their calling, and to walk with uprightness, according to the truth; and that we ought never to use any subterfuges, or the least dissimulation in matters of religion. II. *St. Paul* establishes in this chapter the doctrine of justification by faith alone in *Jesus Christ*; but he teaches, at the same time, and very expressly too, that this doctrine does by no means authorise men to live in sin; that, on the contrary, the true faith by which we are justified does necessarily destroy sin in us, and cause us to live to God. This is what *St. Paul* teaches us in these excellent words, which so well describe the condition and sentiments of a true believer in *Jesus Christ*; *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

CHAP. III.

ST. *Paul* blames the *Galatians* for departing from that doctrine they had before embraced, and which teaches, that men are justified by faith in *Christ* without the works of the law; and to shew that that was the only true doctrine, he puts them in mind, I. That when they received it, God was pleased to communicate to them the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost. II. He proves, by the example of *Abraham*, by the nature of the promises which were made to him and his posterity, and by the curse which the law denounces against those that should not perfectly fulfil it, that all men, even the Gentiles themselves, must be justified by faith in *Christ*; from whence it follows, that those who pretended to be justified by the law, deprived themselves of these promises, and continued under the curse. III. He confirms the same, by observing that the law of *Moses*, which was not given till long after the promise that God had made to *Abraham*, could not disannul the said promise; but that God had given that law by the ministry of *Moses*, he being mediator between God, and the people, to keep the *Israelites* in obedience, until *Christ* should come; and to prepare men to receive that grace which was to render them all children of God, as well the Gentiles as the *Jews*; according to the promise that had been made to the patriarch *Abraham*.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to consider upon this chapter, I. That it is a great folly, and an extreme blindness, to turn aside from the truth after we have known it, and to end ill, after having begun well. II. That the wonderful gifts of the Holy Ghost, which were communicated to the first Christians, prove the divinity of the doctrine which they had embraced, and its excellency above the law. We see, III. The proofs St. *Paul* alledges, to shew that it is by faith in *Christ* that

that men are justified; which proofs are taken from the example of *Abraham* from the promises God had made him, from the curse which the law denounced against the *Israelites*, and from the time when the law was given. The manner of the apostle's reasoning upon this subject, shews that he had received from God extraordinary wisdom, and should convince us of the truth of his doctrine, since we find such solid proofs of it in the law itself, and in the covenant which God had made with *Abraham*. IV. And lastly, The wisdom and goodness of God appear after a most remarkable manner, in his having given the law to restrain men from sin, and bring them to *Christ*, till the time should come when he would receive into his covenant both *Jews* and Gentiles. Let us from hence acknowledge, that since we have the happiness to live in these times, and become the children and heirs of God, by faith in *Christ*, we are bound to render him a sincere and filial obedience, and to discharge those duties to which we are engaged by the covenant of grace, whereunto we have been received.

CHAP. IV.

THIS chapter consists of three parts. I. In the first St. *Paul* represents the difference between the condition of the *Jews* under the law, and the glorious state of Christians under the Gospel, who have the happiness of being adopted the children of God; to shew how much the *Galatians* were to blame, in desiring to return to the yoke of the *Mosaical* ceremonies. This he does by the comparison of a child under tutors and governors, with a son who has his fortune in his own hands. II. He speaks of the great affection which he had for them, and of that which they formerly had conceived for him, and lets them know how uneasy he was on their account. III. He represents the difference there was between the covenant of the law, and that of the Gospel, and between those who adhered to the one or the other, under the types
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of *Ishmael* and *Isaac*, the two sons of *Abraham*; one born according to the course of nature, of *Hagar*, that was a servant; and the other miraculously born, according to the promise of God, of *Sarah*, who was a free woman, and the wife of *Abraham*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE general aim of this chapter is, I. To instruct us in the difference there is between *Jews* and *Christians*, and to shew how happy we are who live under the Gospel dispensation, that have been adopted of God to be his children, through faith in *Christ*. This is a doctrine which should excite in us a lively sense of our happiness, and great gratitude towards God; it ought likewise to inspire us with sentiments worthy the glory of our adoption, and especially induce us to live as the children of God, and to obey him willingly, and from a principle of love. II. As *St. Paul* laboured with great earnestness to recover the purity of the faith among the *Galatians*, and prevent them from blending the ceremonies of the *Mosaical* law with the Gospel, the ministers of *Christ* ought to endeavour to maintain religion in its purity, and to preserve their people from error and vice. And if the *Galatians* were to blame, to desire, after they had been freed by *Jesus Christ* from the *Mosaical* ceremonies, to be again under its yoke, Christians are not less to blame, who having the knowledge of the Gospel, apply themselves to the vain and frivolous things of this world. III. The allegory of *Sarah* and *Hagar*, by which *St. Paul* represented the different states of those who wanted to remain under the covenant of the law, and those who confined themselves to that of the Gospel, may likewise be applied to Christians; and sets before us the difference between those who seek their happiness in the things of this world, and remain under the slavery of sin; and those who, being freed from this bondage, enjoy the glorious liberty of the sons of God. IV. We may observe in this chapter, that the *Galatians* had

had once had an extraordinary respect and love for *St. Paul*; but that he was afraid they were changed with respect to him, though he loved them as sincerely as ever. Christians ought to esteem and cherish good and faithful pastors; but they who having had these sentiments, do not persevere in them, are very much to blame, as well as those who conceive an aversion to them because they tell them the truth. As for the faithful servants of God, they have always the most tender affection for the church of *Christ*; are continually in fear for those committed to their charge; and most heartily concerned when they do not make suitable returns for their love and care.

CHAP. V.

THERE are two parts in this chapter. I. In the first, *St. Paul* exhorts the *Galatians* to continue in their Christian liberty, which, he says, consists in not being subject to circumcision, and to the ceremonies of the law of *Moses*. He tells them, that *Christ* would be of no advantage to them, if they retained these ceremonies; and advises them not to hearken to such as would suggest to them other sentiments, and even not to endure them among them. II. He exhorts them not to abuse this liberty, nor to take occasion from thence to live licentiously, nor to follow the desires of the flesh. He recommends to them to love one another, and to live in peace, and gives a detail of the sins to which the flesh inclines men, and the fruits which the Holy Ghost produces in those who are guided by him.

REFLECTIONS:

THIS chapter is very instructive, and we ought carefully to remember the doctrine contained in it. *St. Paul* explains here very clearly, how we are to understand what he has taught in this Epistle; namely, that Christians are no longer under the law, and that the works of the law are not necessary to justification.

That is to say, Christians are not obliged to observe circumcision, nor the other ceremonies of the law; but that they are under an indispensable obligation of leading a holy life. The apostle says, in the clearest and most positive manner, that justifying faith operates by love and good works; and that we ought not to take occasion from the doctrine of justification by faith, and our Christian liberty, to live in sin and licentiousness. He shews what a great difference there is between those that live according to the flesh, and those that are guided by the Spirit of God; he specifies the sins of the flesh, the chief of which are impurity,, sensuality, animosities, and divisions; and declares that those who commit these sins shall never enjoy the kingdom of God. He shews, what are the effects which the Spirit of God produces in true believers. Lastly, He says, that those who belong to *Christ*, and in whom his Spirit dwells, are distinguished by their following the dictates of that Holy Spirit, and by their crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts. All this shews, that the design of the Gospel is to advance men in piety and holiness, and that this ought to be our chief study.

CHAP. VI.

I. *ST. Paul* exhorts the *Galatians* to reprove with meekness those that fall into any fault, and to be animated towards them with a spirit of charity, humility and forbearance. He exhorts them, II. To provide for the subsistence of their teachers, and to exercise charity. III. He concludes with advising them once again, not to hearken to those that would oblige them to be circumcised, and makes a short recapitulation of his doctrine, and of this whole Epistle.

REFLECTIONS.

ST. Paul teaches us in this chapter, I. That those who have more knowledge than others, and are more advanced in piety, ought to bear with those who are not

not so well instructed, and reprove with meekness those who sin through infirmity, considering them always as brethren, and remembering that they themselves may likewise fall by temptation, and that every one is accountable to God for himself, and must bear his own burden. II. That Christians are obliged to provide for the maintenance of their pastors, and to do good to all men, but especially to the members of the church, and those who labour in its edification. III. That these are indispensable duties, and that God will judge us according to the manner of our discharging them; as St. Paul shews, when he says, *Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*—Lastly, It must be observed, and carefully remembered, what St. Paul says at the end of his Epistle, and which is the sum of his whole doctrine; that God will not consider whether a man be a Jew or a Gentile, whether he be circumcised or uncircumcised; but that what he chiefly requires is, that we become new men regenerated. This is the meaning of the following words: *In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature, and as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.* Amen.

The End of the Epistle of St. PAUL to the GALATIANS.

THE
EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL.

TO THE
EPHESIANS.

ARGUMENT.

St. Paul writ this Epistle when he was a prisoner at Rome, about the year of our Lord sixty-one, to the church of Ephesus, which he himself had founded; having made a considerable stay in that city, as appears from Acts xix. 20. This Epistle consists of two parts. In the first, which is contained in the three first chapters, he represents to the Ephesians the favour which God had shewed them in receiving them into his covenant, who had been most of them Gentiles. In the second, he exhorts them to holiness, and instructs them in the principal duties of the Christian life; this is the design of the three last chapters.

CHAP. I.

I. **T**HE apostle returns thanks to God for having chosen the *Ephesians* to salvation, and for having given them the knowledge of *Christ*, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost. II. He prays to the Lord to increase their knowledge and their gifts, and that he

he would give them grace rightly to comprehend the excellency of their vocation, and the glory to which they were called in *Jesus Christ*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE beginning of this Epistle teaches us, I. That the greatest blessing God ever bestowed on men, was to give them the knowledge of *Jesus Christ*, to ordain the means of salvation, and call them to it by the Gospel. II. That this great favour, and all the spiritual blessings we enjoy, proceed wholly from the mercy of God, who has vouchsafed to elect us to salvation in his Son. III. That our hearts ought to be affected with so valuable a blessing, and that we should praise God continually for it, saying, with *St. Paul*, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ*. IV. That the design which God proposed to himself in thus choosing and calling us to the knowledge of himself, was to render us holy and unreprouable before him in love; and therefore that holiness ought to be our chief study, as it is the only means of attaining to glory. V. The prayers which *St. Paul* offers up for the *Ephesians*, teach us, that it is not sufficient to have been once enlightened by the Gospel, and to have had some sense of the love of God, but that we should always go on increasing in goodness, and labour to acquire daily more and more knowledge, and make a continual progress in holiness. VI. And lastly, Since all our happiness, and our increase in faith and holiness depend, as *St. Paul* has assured us in strong terms, on our understanding rightly the excellence of the divine call, and of the heavenly treasure, we ought continually to meditate upon them, and beg of God to enlighten us, and strengthen us more and more by his grace, in this beautiful prayer of the apostle: *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ the Father of glory, may give unto us the spirit of wisdom, — that the eyes of our understanding being enlightened,*

we may know the hope of his calling, and what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance which he has prepared for the saints. Amen.

CHAP. II.

IN this chapter the apostle shews, I. That when all men, both *Jews* and Gentiles, were dead in their sins, God saved them by *Jesus Christ*; and he observes particularly, that they were indebted for this great benefit to the sole mercy of God, who had delivered them from a state of condemnation and corruption, and had given them a capacity of doing good works. II. He then puts the *Ephesians* in mind that they were formerly heathens, and excluded from the covenant of God; and of the favour God had shewn them, in removing the distinction which was between them and the *Jews*, and in uniting them so as to be but one people, and from thenceforwards to compose, all of them together, but one family and one temple, holy to the Lord.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to consider here, I. That all men without exception were naturally in a state of corruption and condemnation, and dead in trespasses and sins; but that they are delivered from this dismal state, and raised to the hope of eternal life, through the great mercy of God, and by the death and resurrection of our Lord *Jesus Christ*. From whence it follows, that if we be saved, it is by the pure grace of God, and does not proceed from ourselves. But this doctrine shews us likewise, that the design of God was to bring men off from their corruption, and to sanctify them; and that although we be not saved by works, yet *God has created us in Christ Jesus unto good works, which he hath prepared for us to walk in*, as St. Paul says. II. We see in this chapter, that the distinction which there was formerly between the *Jews* and Gentiles, is abolished, since *Christ* has caused salvation to be preached

preached unto the Gentiles, who were not in covenant with him, as well as to the *Jews*. This doctrine should produce in us, who are descended from the heathens, a lively sense of the goodness of God, and make us remember, that we were in time past Gentiles, —having no hope, and without God in the world: but now are made nigh by the blood of Christ; so that we are no more strangers, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. So great a favour obliges us to great gratitude, and to live in a manner suitable to the glory of our condition, and to the happy state in which it has pleased God to place us.

CHAP. III.

I. AFTER St. Paul had taught us in the foregoing chapter, that the Gentiles who had embraced Christianity composed but one people with the converted *Jews*, he tells the *Ephesians* that he was a prisoner at *Rome* for preaching this doctrine; the *Jews* having accused him, and delivered him to the Gentiles for no other reason. He observes, that the calling of the Gentiles had been formerly a hidden mystery, and unknown to mankind; but that God had foretold it by the prophets, and revealed it to the apostles by the Holy Ghost; and he exhorts the *Ephesians* not to be disheartened at the afflictions he endured, and which were so glorious and profitable for them. II. He next beseeches God to confirm them in his calling, to strengthen them in faith, charity, and all kind of spiritual gifts, and give them the grace to know more and more the great and wonderful love of our Lord *Jesus Christ*.

REFLECTIONS.

ST. Paul teaches us in this chapter, that the calling of the Gentiles was a mystery unknown before the coming of *Christ*, but that the mystery had been revealed by the Holy Ghost to the apostles. This should engage us to bless God with all our heart, not only because

because we live in a time in which this mystery is revealed, but particularly as we are of those nations which were formerly in the darkness of idolatry, but do now partake of the promises of God by the Gospel, inasmuch that we have at present a free access to God by his Son *Jesus Christ*. Let us continually meditate upon this great mercy, which God has exercised towards us; let us have a just sense of the value and extent of this wonderful love of our Lord, to the end we may be thereby more and more excited to love him, and aspire to the glory he has prepared for us; this is the effect which the doctrine laid down by the apostle in this chapter ought to produce in us; for which purpose let us beseech God with St. *Paul*, to grant us, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might, by his spirit, in the inner man; that *Christ* may dwell in our hearts by faith; that we being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints the greatness of God's love in *Christ Jesus*, and may be filled with the abundance of God's grace. Amen.

CHAP. IV.

ST. *Paul* here begins to exhort the *Ephesians* to the duties of a Christian life, recommending to them, before all things, peace and concord. To induce them to it, he shews, I. That all Christians enjoy in common the same spiritual advantages; that the different gifts which *Christ* granted to men, after his ascension into heaven, and the different offices he had appointed in the church, did all tend to the mutual edification of the faithful; to unite them to each other, so as to make but one body; to confirm them in truth and holiness, and guide them by this means to perfection and salvation. II. After this the apostle exhorts the *Ephesians* not to live as they had done before their conversion to Christianity, and as the heathens still did; but to lead a life entirely new, and conformable to the precepts of the Gospel of *Christ*.

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He warns them particularly against the impurities and dissoluteness of the heathens, as well as lying, theft, wrath, obscene discourses, slander, and all bitterness and animosities.

REFLECTIONS.

FROM this chapter we may gather, I. In general that Christians ought to live in a manner suitable to the vocation wherewith God has honoured them. II. That being all members of the same body, having all of us the same faith, the same hope, the same God, and the same Saviour, we ought to live in peace and in perfect unity. III. That since our Lord has distributed different gifts to men, and has particularly appointed after his ascension, extraordinary ministers, such as the apostles, and ordinary ministers, such as pastors and teachers, we are bound to acknowledge the necessity and advantage of the ministry, to make a right use of it, and by its means to improve in faith, in piety, and charity. IV. That Christians should not be like wavering and fickle children, nor give credit to all kinds of doctrines, and to all that corrupt and designing men may insinuate; but that they should be steady in their belief, and for that purpose adhere inviolably to the Gospel, and to the doctrine of *Jesus Christ*, which alone can lead them to perfection and eternal happiness. V. *St. Paul* here teaches us, that the Christian Religion calls us to holiness, and that those who have been instructed in the truth by *Jesus Christ*, are by no means allowed to live like the Gentiles, who were involved in ignorance, and for want of knowing God, abandoned themselves to all kinds of disorders; that the design of the Gospel is, that *We should put off the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts; and that we should be renewed in our minds, and—put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.* VI. The particular sins which *St. Paul* condemns as altogether unworthy of Christians, are first, impurity and dissoluteness, which he represents as the reigning sin

sin of the heathen; next, lying and deceiving, injustice and theft; idleness, lasciviousness, and indecent discourse; which offend our neighbour, and grieve the Spirit of God; and lastly, anger, bitterness, and calumny. Christianity engages us to avoid all these sins; and to study purity, sincerity, justice, and meekness; that so we may bear the image of our heavenly Father, and that he may own us for the disciples of his Son *Jesus Christ* our Lord.

CHAP. V.

IN this chapter we see, I. Exhortations to charity and purity. St. *Paul*, to dissuade the *Ephesians* from impurity, in particular declares to them, that that sin would draw down upon men the wrath of God; and represents to them, that God had delivered them from the darkness of paganism, by enlightening them with the light of the Gospel. II. He advises them to behave with prudence, to redeem the time, and to avoid excess of wine, and profane mirth; and exhorts them to spiritual joy and thanksgiving. III. He prescribes the duties of husbands and wives.

REFLECTIONS.

WE are to learn from hence, I. That the character of children of God, which we bear, obliges us to imitate him, especially in his love, and in his goodness, and to walk in the steps of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, who so loved us as to give himself for us. II. That Christians cannot have too much horror for impurity; that this vice should not be so much as named among them; that they ought never to utter any free, foolish, or indecent words, nor any thing contrary to modesty; but that all their discourses ought to be grave and edifying; and that those who transgress the laws of purity and chastity, and live in uncleanness, bring upon themselves the wrath of God, and will have no part in his kingdom. III. That the light of the Gospel, which

which has shined upon us, delivering us from the darkness of paganism, does not allow us to imitate the heathens in their disorders, and that so far from partaking of other men's sins, we are rather to reprove them. IV. *St. Paul* gives us a rule of prudence, advising us in all respects to govern ourselves with wisdom and caution, and to make a good use of time. V. He says, that intemperance and drunkenness are vices utterly unworthy of Christians; and that, instead of abandoning ourselves to sensuality, and to carnal and profane pleasures, we should seek after that spiritual joy which the Holy Ghost produces, and which excites us to edify one another, and to praise God continually in heart and mouth; *giving thanks always for all things, unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Lastly, The apostle, proceeding to particular duties, exhorts husbands and wives to live together in perfect harmony. The duty of husbands is to love their wives; and that of wives, to honour their husbands, and to be in subjection to them; the love which husbands owe to their wives, he represents by the love of *Christ* to his church; and the subjection which wives ought to be in to their husbands, by the church's dependence on *Jesus Christ*. This comparison made use of by *St. Paul*, represents, in the strongest light, the necessity of these reciprocal duties between man and wife, and how sincere their union ought to be; which should convince us of the great importance of *St. Paul's* instructions upon this subject.

CHAP. VI.

ST. Paul lays down the duties of children and parents; of servants and masters. II. He represents to the *Ephesians*, that since they were not only to fight against weak men, but likewise against all that is powerful in the world, and even against their spiritual enemies, the evil angels; they ought to be clothed and armed with faith, righteousness, and hope,

and make use of the word of God and prayer, that they may resist and overcome their enemies. III. He concludes this Epistle, by recommending himself to the prayers of the *Ephesians*, and likewise by praying for them.

REFLECTIONS.

THE duties here prescribed are very important, and highly necessary, not only to the good of families, and of civil society, but also for the edification of the church. The first of these duties relates to children, who are obliged by the command of God, as well as the law of nature, to obey their fathers and mothers, according to the will of the Lord; and that parents, on the other hand, are bound to take care of their children, especially to educate them in the fear of God, and in a Christian manner, giving them all necessary instructions, adding to these reproof and correction, when they stand in need of them. As for servants, their condition engages them to obey their masters, and to serve them faithfully, whether absent or present. On the other hand, masters should treat their domestics with gentleness and equity; remembering that there is a Master in heaven, to whom they are subject as well as their servants, and who has no respect of persons. And let it be considered, that if masters were to have this just regard for their servants, who in those times were mostly Gentiles, and were slaves besides; masters are now much more obliged to perform the same duties, since their servants are free persons, and Christians, as well as themselves. The second part of this chapter engages us to remember, I. That being in this life exposed to divers dangers, but especially to our spiritual enemies, and to the temptations with which we are surrounded, we ought to stand upon our guard, to resist those enemies, and to secure ourselves from their snares. That for this purpose, we ought always to confirm and strengthen ourselves in faith, in truth, and in hope :

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to read and meditate continually upon the word of God, and to pray with zeal and perseverance. What is said about the end of this Epistle, teaches us, that Christians are obliged, by the love they owe to *Jesus Christ*, and for their own interest, to pray for those who preach the word of God, and who labour to promote his kingdom; and that pastors, on their part, ought likewise to pray for the churches of *Christ*, and to put up prayers in behalf of all Christians, as St. *Paul* did for the *Ephesians*; namely, that *peace may be to the brethren, and love, with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; that grace may be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.* Amen.

The End of the Epistle of St. PAUL to the EPHESIANS.

THE
EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL
TO THE
PHILIPPIANS.

ARGUMENT.

St. Paul wrote this Epistle, as well as the former, while he was a prisoner at Rome, about the year of Christ sixty-one, to thank the Christians of the city of Philippi, for the relief they had sent him to Rome by Epaphroditus, one of their pastors. He informs them of his condition, and gives them several exhortations.

CHAP. I.

I. **S**T. Paul begins with thanksgivings, and with prayers for the confirmation of the *Philippians* in faith and holiness. II. He tells them, that his imprisonment had contributed towards promoting the Gospel in the city of *Rome*. III. He declares he was disposed to glorify *Christ*, whether by life or death, and that he only desired to live for the advantage of the church. IV. He exhorts the *Philippians* to a behaviour worthy of the Gospel, and to patience in afflictions.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

I. WE see at the entrance of this Epistle, *St. Paul's* great zeal and perfect charity, in the prayers which he offers up to God for the *Philippians*, and in the proofs he gives them of his love and joy at hearing of their steadfastness in the faith. This is a lesson to pastors to love their flocks with a cordial affection in *Christ Jesus*, and to pray to God incessantly for the entire sanctification of the faithful. II. We ought to admire the ways of God's Providence, who was pleased that *St. Paul* should be imprisoned at *Rome*, that he might have an opportunity to preach the Gospel there, and that his sufferings might serve to excite the zeal of many, who were before afraid to make an open profession of the Gospel. This is one of those examples which prove that what the enemies of the truth do to destroy it, helps often to spread it the more. III. We see that though there were people who preached the Gospel out of envy and jealousy against *St. Paul*, yet he rejoiced because the Gospel was thereby promoted. God sometimes makes use even of persons who do not act upon a good principle, to perform his work; but however it be done, those who, like *St. Paul*, are animated with a true zeal, are pleased with it, even though it be a prejudice to themselves. IV. The sentiments of this apostle concerning life and death, are such as all true Christians ought to entertain; who should always be ready both to live and to die for the glory of God; their desire is to leave the world, that they may be with the Lord; and if they wish to live, it is only that they may be useful to the church, and to their neighbours. Finally, This passage of the Epistle to the *Philippians*, where *St. Paul* says, he desired to leave this world to be with the Lord, proves clearly, that the faithful are happy and with the Lord after their death, in expectation of the resurrection: for if it was not so, this apostle would have had no reason to desire death rather

ther than life. V. The close of this chapter shews, that the duty of all Christians is, to behave in a manner worthy of the Gospel, and not to be staggered at afflictions, especially when they undergo them for the sake of *Christ*.

CHAP. II.

I. *St. Paul* exhorts the *Philippians* very affectionately to concord and humility. And to this end he proposes the example of *Christ's* humiliation, and of the glory to which he was afterwards exalted. And represents to them that this is an inducement to work out their salvation with humility and perseverance. II. He exhorts them to live in peace, and by a pure and innocent behaviour to edify the heathens among whom they lived; and he assures them he would suffer death with joy, if it were necessary for the confirmation of their faith. III. He promises to send *Timothy* to them, whose zeal and faithfulness he praises. He likewise recommends to them *Epaphroditus*, one of their pastors, who was returning to them after recovering from a great sickness.

REFLECTIONS.

WE learn from hence, I. That one of the most important duties of Christians, is true charity; that they should live together in perfect unity, and in a spirit of humility, and that they should promote the interests of others as well as their own. II. *St. Paul* sets before our eyes the profound humiliation of *Jesus Christ*, who, though he was equal to God, abased himself even to the death of the cross, and who, by his obedience and sufferings, was exalted to supreme glory. The apostle proposes this example, to teach us, that if we have the same sentiments of humility as our Saviour had, we shall likewise attain to glory. III. This serious exhortation, *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*, should inspire us all with a great

great zeal, to labour continually with profound humility in the work of our salvation; making use for that purpose of the means which God affords us, among which one of the most effectual is, to have recourse to him by prayer, forasmuch as it is *God who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* IV. This chapter further teaches us, that Christians ought to avoid quarrels and disputes, and distinguish themselves by an unblameable behaviour, so that they may shine like burning lights in a crooked and perverse generation. V. *St. Paul's* declaration, that he was ready to sacrifice his blood and his life with pleasure, for the edification of the *Philippians*, shews, that the true ministers of *Christ* are entirely devoted to the service of God and of his church; that this is the end of all their labours; and that when it is necessary to lose even their lives for the advancement of the salvation of men, they ought to lay them down with gladness. VI. The testimony which the apostle gives of the sincerity and great zeal of *Timothy*; what he says of *Epaphroditus*, of his sickness and recovery, and the earnest manner in which he recommends him to the *Philippians*, shews, that true pastors, who only seek the interests of *Christ*, and discharge their function with zeal and sincerity, deserve all the love and all the esteem of Christians; that the lives and preservation of such ought to be very dear to the church; that they ought to be received with all demonstrations of joy, and to be highly esteemed by their people, who should submit to their instructions and exhortations.

CHAP. III.

I. *St. Paul* advises the *Philippians* not to hearken to false teachers, who preached up the observation of circumcision, and boasted of the external advantages that distinguished the *Jews* from other nations. II. He shews by his example, that all those advantages which he had been in possession of when

he lived in *Judaism*, were unprofitable, and even prejudicial to salvation; and he says, that it was for that reason he had renounced them, to adhere to *Christ* alone; and that he continually endeavoured to advance more and more in the knowledge of our Lord, and to attain to perfection and glory, by an entire conformity to his sufferings and resurrection. III. He exhorts the *Philippians* to come into his sentiments, and to avoid their false teachers, whose character he describes, saying, that they were carnal men; whereas true Christians are spiritual, and do only aim at heaven.

REFLECTIONS.

We are to observe in general in this whole chapter, that as St. *Paul* exhorted the *Philippians* to beware of false teachers, who endeavoured to enslave them to the ceremonies of the law of *Moses*, it is very necessary that Christians should fortify themselves against error, and all that is contrary to the purity of faith. Besides which, we may gather from this chapter these four distinguishing marks of true Christians. I. The first is, that they have the same opinion of the things of the world, as St. *Paul* had of the external advantages he possessed when he was a *Jew*; that is to say, that they set no value upon those things in comparison of the excellency of the knowledge of *Christ* their Lord; and that they consider them even as hurtful, when they hinder them from following their heavenly calling. II. The second character of true Christians is, that, in imitation of St. *Paul*, they aim at perfection, seeking always to become more and more like unto their Saviour, leaving the things which are behind them, advancing towards those before them, and by continual endeavours pressing to the mark and prize of their calling in *Christ Jesus*. III. The third character of the faithful is, that being united all in one common faith, and the belief of the same essential truths, they live in peace; and if they should have different sentiments in matters of little importance, their

their difference of opinion will not cause a division and separation among them. IV. The last character St. *Paul* gives of the true disciples of our Lord is, that whereas carnal men do only love the things of the world, and have no other God but their belly; true Christians live after a spiritual and a heavenly manner, behaving themselves as those whose country is heaven, from whence they expect their Lord and Saviour, who will come from thence to raise them up, and to receive them into the glory of his kingdom.

CHAP. IV.

THIS chapter consists of two parts. I. The first contains exhortations to perseverance, unity, and spiritual joy; to confidence in God, and to a holy life. II. In the second, St. *Paul* thanks the *Philippians* for the contributions they had sent him for his subsistence in prison; and prays for them.

REFLECTIONS.

THE first part of this chapter instructs us in these five duties. I. The first is, to persevere continually in the purity of faith, and in piety. II. The apostle's exhortation to *E odias* and *Syntychē*, two Christian women, who, without doubt, differed in their opinion upon some article of religion, to live in peace, shews, that Christians ought to live in unity, to endeavour to be of one mind in matters of faith, and to bear with each other, if they do not in every respect think alike. III. The third duty, is to rejoice always in God with a spiritual joy. IV. The fourth, not to be full of the cares of this life, but to have recourse to God by prayer in all our wants, and to trust in his providence. V. The fifth duty is of a very great extent; it is to adhere constantly to all things that are honest, just, pure, holy, virtuous, and praise-worthy. There may be two reflections made upon the second part of this chapter. I. First, St. *Paul* teaches us, by his example, to be contented in whatever state or condition we find

ourselves, whether we be in poverty, or whether we be in plenty. II. Secondly, The thanks which this apostle returns the *Philippians* for what they had sent to him at *Rome*, to support him when a prisoner, express great disinterestedness, and at the same time no less gratitude; and the prayers he offers to God for them, upon that occasion, teach us, that it is a work very agreeable to God, to assist such as are in want, and particularly his faithful servants, and those that suffer for the Gospel; that these works of charity rejoice and comfort good men, and that they are sacrifices of a sweet savour, which God accepts, and rewards according to the riches of his grace, with glory in *Jesus Christ*.

The End of the Epistle of St. PAUL to the PHILIPPIANS.

THE
EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL

TO THE

COLOSSIANS.

ARGUMENT.

This is likewise an Epistle which St. Paul writ whilst he was a prisoner at Rome the first time, in the year of our Lord sixty-one. The design of it is to exhort the Colossians not to suffer themselves to be seduced by certain false teachers, who would persuade them to join the ceremonies of the law, and the notions of the heathen philosophers, to the Christian faith. This is the subject of the two first chapters. In the two last, he prescribes the principal duties of piety and holiness.

CHAP. I.

THIS chapter consists of two parts. I. *St. Paul* praises God that the Gospel had been preached to the *Colossians* by *Epaphras*, and had had great success among them; and he beseeches the Lord to fill them more and more with the knowledge of his will, and with all kind of spiritual gifts. II. The apostle represents *Christ* as the only author of salvation: as him

him who created the angels and all other creatures ; and by whom all men, the Gentiles in particular, have been perfectly reconciled to God. St. *Paul* speaks thus to the *Colossians*, to convince them that the doctrine of *Christ* was sufficient to bring men to perfection and salvation, without any necessity of the law of *Moses*, or any other doctrines. III. Lastly, He assures them that the sufferings which he endured, ought not to stagger them in the profession of the Gospel ; and that the end of his preaching was to bring the Gentiles and all men to salvation.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

I. THE praises and thanksgivings with which St. *Paul* begins this Epistle, teach us, that God has granted us the greatest blessing in causing his Gospel to be preached among us, and that we ought to praise him continually for it ; but this blessing can be of no use to us, unless, as St. *Paul* exhorted the *Colossians*, we walk worthy of the Lord, doing that which is well pleasing in his sight, and being fruitful in every good work. II. The prayers St. *Paul* joins to these thanksgivings, teach us, that it is not enough to have arrived at some degree of truth and holiness, but that we ought to aim at perfection, and to beg of God that he would continually increase his knowledge, and the gifts of the spirit in us. These prayers of the apostle instruct us farther, that the purpose for which God grants us this knowledge and these gifts, is to frame our minds to holiness, to bring us to perfection and glory, by a continual increase of his grace. We see in the second part of this chapter, that *Christ* is the creator of all things, that to know him is the most perfect and useful knowledge, and that by him God has been pleased to reconcile all men to himself. What we are to gather from hence is, that we are to seek for salvation in *Christ Jesus* alone, by continually persevering in faith and obedience to the Gospel, and that no temptation whatever should be able to turn us away from it.

CHAP. II.

I. *St. Paul* testifies to the *Colossians*, that his fear lest they should suffer themselves to be drawn away by those who endeavoured to introduce the subtilties of philosophy, and the traditions of the *Jews* into the Christian Religion, obliged him to make use of these exhortations. II. For this reason he continues to represent to them, that in *Christ Jesus* every thing was found that was necessary to justify and sanctify men; and consequently, that they ought not to give heed to philosophy, no more than to the ceremonies of the *Jews*, since they were useless, and had been abolished by the death of *Christ*. III. He concludes from thence, that Christians are no longer bound to observe these ceremonies, and that they ought not to listen to those who would confine them to a distinction of meats and days, and introduce the worship of angels, and several vain and superstitious practices.

REFLECTIONS.

THE great zeal *St. Paul* shews at the beginning of this chapter for the *Colossians*, and his apprehensions of their being seduced by false teachers, proves, that the rulers of the church, and Christians in general, ought carefully to guard against error, and to beware that they be not diverted from the pure faith by subtilties, or doctrines invented by men. II. We see here, that the true way to prevent being seduced, is to adhere to *Christ* alone, and to his Gospel, and to look upon him as one that has perfectly atoned for our sins; from whom alone all knowledge and holiness proceed, and who will undoubtedly save those who truly believe in him. III. It ought to be observed, that when *St. Paul* says, that *Christ* has, by his death, taken away the obligation that was against us, and which consisted in the legal ordinances, having entirely abolished them, this only relates to circumcision,

cumcision, and the ceremonies which God had formerly prescribed to the *Jews*; but that he has not freed us from the obligation of keeping the commandments of God; that, on the contrary, he died to enable us to observe them the better, and to communicate his grace to us after a much more perfect manner than the *Mosaical* ceremonies were able to do. Lastly, We learn from this chapter, that it is a very dangerous thing to introduce into religion voluntary will-worship, and the inventions of men, and vain and superstitious customs, though they even carry with them some appearance of devotion; and that we should always confine ourselves to the Gospel, and adhere to that true and solid piety which is there prescribed, and which consists in a pure faith, and in a renunciation of the world, and of the lusts of the flesh.

CHAP. III.

I. *St. Paul* shews, that faith in *Christ* raised from the dead, engages Christians to seek for the things of heaven, and to renounce those sins that were common among the Gentiles, and particularly uncleanness. II. He exhorts them next, to kindness, humility, mutual forgiveness, charity, peace, and to glorify God with their discourses, by their praises, and by their whole behaviour. III. He shews lastly, the duties of wives and husbands, of children and parents, of servants and masters.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter *St. Paul* shews, that those who truly believe that *Christ* is risen, and that he sits on the right hand of God, will not set their hearts upon worldly things, but turn their thoughts to heaven, and to that life which is prepared for us in *Christ Jesus*. II. The apostle informs us, that of the sins which Christianity obliges us to renounce, one, which particularly

particularly exposes men to the wrath of God, is impurity and all uncleanness, whether of thought, word, or deed; next he forbids all kind of wrath, calumny, unkind expressions, lying, and, in general, all the vices of the old man, that is of corrupt nature. He points out in the virtues and principal duties of the Christian life; which are, to abound in mercy, kindness, meekness, and humility; to bear with and pardon one another, to have a sincere love for our neighbour, to edify one another by good discourses, to be continually rendering thanks to God our Father, and so to behave ourselves, that all our words, and all our actions, may tend to his glory. III. To these general duties St. *Paul* adds the particular ones, to which wives and husbands, children and parents, servants and masters, are mutually obliged; commanding wives to submit to their husbands, husbands to love their wives; children to obey their parents, and fathers to treat their children with mildness; servants to obey their masters, and be faithful to them, from a principle of conscience, and masters to be just and equitable to their servants. The repetition here made of these particular duties, which the apostle had before mentioned in the Epistle to the *Ephesians*, is an argument of the greatest importance to them. Let us therefore observe these inviolably, and all the other precepts contained in this chapter; which are so just, and so worthy of the religion we profess; and discharge all the duties required of us, whether in our general calling, as Christians, or in the particular state and condition in which God has placed us.

CHAP. IV.

I. THE apostle exhorts the *Colossians* to persevere in prayer, and to behave wisely, and to speak with prudence and meekness upon all occasions. II. He recommends *Tychicus* and *Onesimus*, whom he sent to them; and concludes his Epistle by salutations and some advices.

REFLECTIONS.

THE first duty which St. *Paul* recommends in this chapter, is to pray continually; to persevere in that holy exercise, and in thanksgivings; and, particularly, to pray for the ministers of *Jesus Christ*, that they may preach the Gospel as it ought to be preached. II. The second duty is to be very prudent, and to redeem the time, especially when we have to do with persons who have an aversion to truth and holiness; to speak always with wisdom and gentleness, and in such a manner, as tends most to the edification of those that hear us, and to avoid every thing that may expose us to danger, without necessity, or give offence to any one. Lastly, The good character St. *Paul* gives of *Tychicus*, *Onesimus*, *Mark*, *Jesus*, *Epaphras*, and St. *Luke*, who were all of them excellent servants of God, and the manner in which he recommends them to the *Colossians*, should convince all Christians, that good ministers, who behave worthy of their office, are a very valuable blessing, and that we ought to love them sincerely, and that they should be received by the church with all kind of respect and affection, as they, on their part, ought to grow more and more zealous, and take heed of the administration which they have received of the Lord, that they may faithfully discharge it.

The End of the Epistle of St. PAUL to the COLOSSIANS.

THE
FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL
TO THE
THESSALONIANS.

ARGUMENT.

This Epistle, which is the oldest of St. Paul's Epistles, was wrote in the fifty-first year of Christ. In the three first chapters the apostle expresses his great joy to hear the happy state of the Thessalonians, and their steadiness in persecutions. He likewise informs them what had happened to him, what sentiments he had had, and what he still had for them. In the two last he exhorts them to piety and holiness.

CHAP. I.

ST. Paul praises God, I. That the *Thessalonians* had received the Gospel which he had preached to them with faith and zeal. And, II. That their church was a pattern to all the churches of *Macedonia* and *Achaia*.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

IT is to be observed in general, on this Epistle, that there is no church which St. *Paul* speaks so advantageously of, and commends so much as the church of *Thessalonica*. At the entrance of the Epistle he expresses the greatest joy, and renders most hearty thanks to God for the happy state of the *Thessalonians*: calling to remembrance the manner in which they received his preaching, their faith, charity, and patience; which shews, that the glory of any church, and what affords the greatest joy and comfort to the faithful servants of God, is to see the Gospel bring forth fruit, and faith, and every virtue flourish and abound in it. The church of *Thessalonica*, which was formerly an example in this respect to the rest, may be still proposed for a pattern to all Christian churches. We should likewise apply to ourselves what St. *Paul* said to the *Thessalonians*, touching their conversion to the Christian Religion; since, like them, we also, through the mercy of God, have been delivered from the darkness of heathenism, and are turned from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even JESUS, which delivers us from the wrath to come.

CHAP. II.

ST. *Paul* does three things in this chapter. I. He puts the *Thessalonians* in mind, that he had preached the Gospel to them with sincerity, and without any view of interest; and, that he might not be burdensome to them, he had supported himself by his own labour; and that he had always exhorted them to live to the honour of that God, who had called them to his glory. II. He blesses God, that his ministry had been effectual among them, and that they had endured with so much constancy, the persecutions which at that time were every where raised against the Christians

tians by the *Jews*, whose hatred he himself had experienced during his stay in *Thessalonica*, finding them the bitterest enemies of the Gospel. III. He shews the desire he had to see the *Thessalonians*, and his ardent affection towards them.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE ministers of the Gospel should learn by St. *Paul's* example to exercise their office with integrity; to preach the pure word of God without any motives of interest or vain glory; to make appear in all their actions, an entire disinterestedness, and a perfect meekness; to behave themselves piously and without reproach, and continually to exhort Christians to a conduct worthy of God, who calls them to his kingdom, and to his glory. II. We see in this chapter, that the duty of those to whom the pure word of God is preached, is to receive it as the *Thessalonians* did, not as the word of man, but as the word of God, and not to be discouraged at the opposition and the persecutions which they might be exposed to; but to bear them with the same constancy as St. *Paul* and the *Thessalonians* endured those which the *Jews* raised against them. III. St. *Paul* complains, that the *Jews* were the avowed enemies of the Gospel, that they prevented, as much as they could, its progress among the heathens, and that by this means they filled up the measure of their iniquities, and drew down the divine vengeance more and more upon them. We have great reason to deplore the obstinacy of the *Jews*, who continue to this day in the same infidelity, feeling the effects of God's wrath, and to pray for their conversion. We see moreover that there have been in all times persons that opposed *Christ's* kingdom, and therefore we must not be surprised, if we find the like among Christians. Lastly, We see in this chapter, the most extraordinary and most affecting marks of St. *Paul's* love and esteem for the *Thessalonians*. Pastors, who are animated with
the

the same spirit as this holy apostle, have the most tender affection for those committed to their charge; there is no joy comparable to that which they feel when they see the fruit of their ministry; and as the faithful are all their hope, and all their joy in this world, they will also be their crown of glory at the coming of our Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ*.

CHAP. III.

THE apostle speaks in this chapter, I. Of the care he took to send *Timothy* from *Athens* to *Thessalonica*, to be informed of the condition of the *Thessalonians*, and to strengthen them. II. Of the great comfort he received from *Timothy*, at his return, brought him the good news of their remembrance of him, and their perseverance in the faith; on which occasion he prays very earnestly for them.

REFLECTIONS.

I. **WHAT** is chiefly to be observed here, is, that *St. Paul*, in his great love for the *Thessalonians*, was not easy till he had sent *Timothy* to know how they did, and to confirm them in the faith. This behaviour of *St. Paul*, shews the great concern true pastors have for their flocks. Their love for the Lord *Jesus*, and for those who hear his voice, makes them to be continually employed in the supply of their wants, and in providing for their edification by all possible means. II. The extraordinary comfort *St. Paul* felt, at being informed by *Timothy* of the perseverance and happy state of the *Thessalonians*, and the thanks he renders to God on this account, are expressed in such strong terms, as denote the most lively sense of joy, tenderness, and esteem. This apostle assures them, he could not sufficiently bless the Lord for that excess of joy he felt when he thought on them. Nothing more sensibly affects the faithful servants of *Jesus Christ*, nor gives them greater pleasure than when they see the faith and piety of those over whom

whom God has appointed them; this being always the principal subject of their prayers and thanksgivings. All Christians should have the same sentiments, and labour for the same end, with their utmost zeal, for the consolation of their spiritual guides, as well as for the glory of God and their own salvation. This is expressed in this prayer of *St. Paul*: *The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one towards another, to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.*

CHAP. IV.

THERE are two things to be observed in this chapter: I. Exhortations to a holy life, and especially to chastity and charity. II. *St. Paul* shews, that Christians ought not to grieve excessively for the dead; and, in this view, he speaks of what shall happen both to the dead and those which shall be alive at the last day, and how they shall be taken up into heaven.

REFLECTIONS.

ST. Paul teaches us, in this chapter, I. That the chief duty of Christians is, to behave themselves in such a manner as is agreeable to God; to keep the commandments we have received from the Lord, and to abound more and more in piety. II. *St. Paul*, as usual, warns the *Thessalonians* in very clear and strong terms against impurity, because this vice was very common among the heathens, especially in great cities, such as *Thessalonica*. He says, that the will of God is, that we should be holy; that we should avoid impurity and evil concupiscence; that every one should know how to keep his body in chastity; that nobody ought to violate the rules of modesty, of charity, and of justice, to gratify the inordinate desires of the flesh; and that God is the avenger of those sins, since he has not called us to uncleanness,
but

but to holiness. III. *St. Paul* teaches us two things concerning charity; one is, that true Christians do not need to be exhorted to charity, since they are taught by God to love one another, and to assist their brethren; and the other, that in order to exercise charity, every one ought to keep within the bounds of his calling, to apply himself to his own business, and to avoid idleness and curiosity, which is a way of life inconsistent with piety and Christianity. Lastly, We see in this chapter, that we ought not to afflict ourselves for the dead, *as men without hope*, since we know that those who die in the Lord, shall rise again, and be carried up into heaven upon the clouds to meet the Lord, together with those who shall be then alive. This doctrine ought to comfort us for the death of such persons as are dear to us, when we have reason to believe them in the number of the faithful; to confirm ourselves against the fear of death, and to excite us to live to the Lord, to the end, that dying likewise in him, we may be raised again one day, to be eternally united to him in the heavenly glory.

CHAP. V.

I. *ST. Paul* having, at the end of the preceding chapter, spoke of *Christ's* coming, says, that the time of his coming was unknown and uncertain; and exhorts Christians to prepare themselves for it by sobriety and watchfulness. II. He prescribes to the *Thessalonians* several duties of piety. III. He concludes his Epistle, by praying God for their sanctification, and recommending himself to their prayers.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter teaches us, I. That the day of the Lord will come in a very sudden manner, surprising men when they least expect it; that it will be a day of terror for those who walk in darkness, and give themselves up to the works of the flesh; but that that day will be full of comfort to believers; and that therefore

therefore the way not to be surprized by it, is to prepare ourselves for it by a sober and mortified life, by faith, by the practice of charity, and all kind of good works. St. *Paul* next prescribes several particular duties, such as, first, the edifying and exhorting one another by good discourses. II. He speaks in the strongest terms of the respect and love due to the pastors and governors of the church, for their works' sake. III. He commands us to live in peace one with another; advising, comforting, and forbearing each other; and avoiding revenge. He adds several sentences, which are so many excellent precepts; such as to rejoice always with spiritual joy; to pray continually; to give thanks to God in all things; not to quench the gifts of the Spirit, either in others, or in ourselves; to try all things, and hold fast that which is good; and to avoid all appearance of evil. These are so many holy rules which we should never lose sight of, and which we should endeavour to put in practice; adding always prayer to our endeavours, and with St. *Paul*, beseeching God *to sanctify intirely our whole spirit, and soul, and body, and preserve them blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Amen.

*The End of the first Epistle of St. PAUL to the
THESSALONIANS.*

THE
SECOND EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL
TO THE
THESSALONIANS.

ARGUMENT.

This Epistle was wrote a little after the former, about the year of Christ fifty-two. It consists of three chapters. In the first St. Paul encourages the Thessalonians against persecution. In the second, He corrects their notions concerning the approach of the last day. And in the third, He exhorts them to live according to the purity of the Gospel.

CHAP. I.

I. **S**T. Paul gives thanks to God, that the faith and charity of the *Thessalonians* increased more and more, and that they persevered in the midst of the persecutions they suffered. II. He assures them, that God would not fail to punish persecutors, and those who did not obey the Gospel, and that he would crown the faithful with everlasting glory at the coming of our Lord *Jesus Christ*. III. He beseeches God to confirm the *Thessalonians*, and to make them increase in faith and holiness.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

I. WE see in this Epistle, that the church of *Thessalonica*, which St. *Paul* had so much commended in the former Epistle, did more and more abound in faith, charity, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost; that St. *Paul's* affection for this church was continually encreasing, and was the subject of his joy and thanksgivings. It is the great glory of the church to be continually improving, and the greatest satisfaction to its ministers to be able to say of the people committed to their charge, what St. *Paul* testifies of the faithful of *Thessalonica*:

II. This chapter teaches us, that Christians, far from being discouraged by those afflictions to which the profession of the Gospel exposes them, are thereby better qualified to enter into the kingdom of God; that such afflictions are a proof of his righteous judgment, and that the Lord will come to give rest and ease to such as have been exposed to them; and to exercise vengeance against persecutors, and all those who obey not the Gospel of *Christ*. This doctrine ought to produce in us patience, and even joy in our afflictions; a lively sense and dread of the judgment of God, and a constant endeavour to please him. The prayer St. *Paul* makes for the confirmation of the *Thessalonians* in faith and the grace of God, shews that we must persevere in goodness, and aim more and more at perfection. This should be our chief care and the subject of our prayers, as St. *Paul* exhorts us in the following words: *We pray always for you, that our God would render you worthy of his calling, and fulfil in you all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power; that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified by you, and you by him, according to the grace of our God, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

CHAP. II.

I. **ST. Paul**, that he might undeceive the *Theſſalonians*, in the opinion ſome had entertained, that the day of the Lord which he had been ſpeaking of would ſoon come, foretels, that before the coming of that day, there would be an apoſtacy in the church, occaſioned by the man of ſin, and the ſon of perdition. II. He deſcribes his characters, the place, the time, the manner of his manifeſtation, the progreſs he would make, and, laſtly, his deſtruction. The apoſtle adds exhortations and prayers in behalf of the *Theſſalonians*.

REFLECTIONS.

THE prophecy contained in this chapter is very remarkable, but ſomewhat obſcure. *St. Paul* foretels that there would happen an almoſt general defection in the church, before the day of the Lord ſhould come. It has been generally believed, that this prophecy foretold the coming of Antichriſt; but it is difficult to explain all the circumſtances of this prophecy. It is naturally enough applied to what happened ſome time after the death of the apoſtles; when ignorance, error, corruption, tyranny, and all ſuperſtitious and diſorders of every kind, were introduced into the church, and reigned therein for ſeveral ages; but this prophecy does likewiſe ſhew, that this apoſtacy and extreme corruption ſhould not laſt always, and that the Lord would put an end to it, by his infinite power. God was pleaſed that this event ſhould be foretold, that we ſhould not be ſurpriſed at it, and the faithful ſhould be upon their guard. It muſt likewiſe be obſerved, after *St. Paul*, that if there have been and ſtill are ſome people, who have ſuffered themſelves to be led away by error, it is the juſt judgment of God, becauſe they did not love the truth, and becauſe they took pleaſure in vice; but thoſe whom God has enlightened with the pure light of the Goſpel, ought to give him thanks, becauſe he has from the beginning choſen them to ſalvation,

tion, and the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ; standing fast in the doctrine they have received, and praying the Lord to sanctify them entirely, and to establish them in every good word and work.

CHAP. III.

I. **ST. Paul** exhorts the *Thessalonians* to pray for him, and for the progress of the Gospel; and he also prays for them. II. He orders them to withdraw from those who lead a wicked life, and to have no communication with them; and he blames those particularly that lived in idleness. III. He concludes his Epistle with prayers for the faithful of *Thessalonica*.

REFLECTIONS.

THERE are three principal reflections to be made on this chapter: I. The first is, that zeal for the glory of God obliges all Christians to pray for the propagation of the Gospel, and for those faithful ministers that preach it; who, on their part, ought likewise to pray for the church and all its members. II. The second is, that if there be any in the church, who lead a disorderly life, and do not behave themselves according to the commands of our Saviour, we ought not to consider them as our brethren, but withdraw ourselves from them. This is what *St. Paul* expressly orders in the name of *Christ*, and what is enjoined in several places of the New Testament. Whereby it appears, that discipline should be exercised; that scandalous sinners ought not to be esteemed members of the church; and that Christians should avoid all intercourse with them. III. It is to be observed, that the apostle particularly condemns those who, instead of employing themselves, and labouring in an honest calling, spend their lives in idleness, in curiosity, and frivolous engagements. It appears from what *St. Paul* says on this head, that this kind of life, generally very common in cities, and which the world looks upon as innocent,

nocent, is utterly unworthy of Christians; and that those who follow it do not deserve even to live, since the apostle has expressly declared, *that if any would not work, neither should he eat.*

*The End of the Second Epistle of St. PAUL to the
THESSALONIANS.*

THE
FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL
TO
TIMOTHY.

ARGUMENT.

St. Paul is thought to have written this Epistle in the year of our Lord sixty-four, to Timothy, whom he had left at Ephesus, to take care of the church in that city. His design was to exhort Timothy to oppose the false teachers; and to instruct him how bishops and pastors ought to govern the church of God.

CHAP. I.

I. **I**N this chapter, the apostle orders *Timothy* to hinder certain *Jewish* doctors from corrupting the doctrine of *Christ*, by subtle, profane, and extravagant notions, and introducing disputes in the church.
II. And because these doctors shewed great zeal for the law, he informs him what is the true use of the law.
III. This gives him occasion to speak of the goodness of God in calling him to the office of an apostle, and in general, of the mercy of God towards sinners.
IV. And lastly, he exhorts *Timothy* to discharge the duties of his function with courage, and to oppose false teachers.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

THE instructions contained in this chapter are the following: I. That the duty of ministers is to teach and preserve sound doctrine, and to oppose such as would alter it, by teaching false or vain doctrines, and such as are only fit to raise disputes and troubles in the church. II. That *the end of the commandment is charity*, such as proceeds out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned; and that those who turn aside from this end, lose themselves in useless discourses. By this rule we may judge whether the doctrines preached are true, and whether we ourselves are in the number of true and sincere Christians. III. That the law, considered as prohibiting the grossest crimes, was not so properly given to good men, who abhor those crimes; from whence it follows, that though it be not abolished, there is no longer the same use for it, in respect to Christians, as formerly; since the Gospel trains men up to the most perfect holiness, and to obey God from a principle of love. IV. St. Paul teaches us here, that *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*, which he confirms by his own example. This is a doctrine full of comfort for those sinners that are truly penitent. But what St. Paul says here, well deserves our notice, namely, that God had shewn him mercy, because in persecuting the church, and blaspheming the name of *Jesus Christ*, he had done it through ignorance and unbelief. We may learn from hence, that it is more easy to obtain pardon for those sins that are committed through ignorance, than those that are committed wilfully, and contrary to the knowledge we have of the will of God. Lastly, We see in this chapter, that our chief care ought to be, to have a good conscience; since in losing that we lose the faith, and fall into the utmost obduracy.

CHAP. II.

I. THE apostle directs that prayer should be made in the church for all men, and particularly for kings and magistrates, though at that time they were heathens; and he founds this order upon the will of God, who would have all men to be saved; and that it was for that purpose he sent his Son into the world, and caused the Gospel to be preached. II. He says, that men ought to pray in a spirit of peace and purity; and that women should be present at the assemblies of the church in modest apparel, and continue in respect and silence.

REFLECTIONS.

FROM this chapter we learn, I. That it is a very necessary duty in religion, to make public prayers for the salvation of all men, and particularly for kings, and those that are in authority. And therefore that these prayers are an essential part of the Christian worship. II. That the goodness of God towards men is so great, that he desires that all should be saved; for which end he has given his Son *Christ Jesus* to be a mediator between God and men. This likewise obliges us to desire the salvation of all men, to love, and to pray for them. III. That no prayers can be acceptable to God, that do not proceed from a pure heart, and from a spirit of charity and peace, free from wrath and litigiousness. Besides this, the apostle gives Christian women three instructions: The first is, to be clothed decently and modestly, as it becomes women that profess to serve God; to shun immodesty, and excess of ornaments; and to observe these rules chiefly when they attend the religious assemblies. The second is, to remain in silence and submission to their husbands at home, as well as in the church. And the third, that they shall be saved, if they take care of the children they bring into the world; if they educate them in piety; and if they themselves continue in faith, charity, holiness, and modesty.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

ST. Paul speaks in this chapter, I. Of the importance of the office of a bishop and pastor, and of the qualities which those ought to have who are admitted into this office. II. Of the office of deacons, whose business it was to distribute the alms of the church, and to assist the bishops in their office; and he shews likewise how deacons ought to be qualified. III. To engage *Timothy* to admit none into any ecclesiastical employ but those who were worthy of it, and to govern the church as he ought, he represents to him the dignity of the church of God, and the excellency of the doctrine taught therein.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT *St. Paul* says of the excellency of the office of a bishop, and of the qualifications that are required in such as aspire to or exercise that office, shews, that it is of divine institution, and of the highest importance. This is what pastors ought most seriously to consider, that they may render themselves worthy of so holy a function; not only by avoiding all those faults that might render their ministry unfruitful, and living in such a manner, as to give no just occasion of reproach; but moreover, by an edifying behaviour, and by giving an example of all kind of virtues. II. From the rules here prescribed by *St. Paul*, it appears that it is not right to admit into holy orders any but persons of an unblameable character, and such as are able to teach, and govern the church of God. III. All Christians are to consider, that since this office is of so great consequence, and the salvation of souls and the glory of God depend on it, the character of pastors should be esteemed venerable and sacred in the church; and those who are invested with it, and behave worthy of it, ought to be had in reverence. As for deacons, it appears from this chapter, that their order, which was established soon after our Lord's

ascension, was preserved in all churches, as well as that of bishops; and besides the great use of those offices in which the deacons were employed, this order was of great service in forming good pastors; the apostle having established a subordination, and appointed that no one should be raised to the office of bishop but by degrees; and that the bishops should be taken from among the deacons, who had faithfully discharged that office. By this means none were placed at the head of the church, but persons well known, and of a sufficient age and experience. It is a great misfortune that this excellent order and subordination is not observed in all churches. Lastly, What the apostle says of the dignity of the church of the living God, and of the excellency of the doctrine taught therein, ought to be seriously considered, as well by those that govern the church as by all the faithful; that so both one and the other may be thereby stirred up to reverence the church of *Christ*, and to remain inviolably attached to it, and to discharge their duty, every one according to his condition and calling.

CHAP. IV.

I. THE apostle warns *Timothy* that there would appear false teachers, who would condemn marriage, and the use of certain meats. II. He exhorts them to teach pure doctrine, and to adhere to true piety, the great advantage of which he represents to him. III. He recommends to him, so to behave as to procure respect to his ministry, notwithstanding his youth, and apply himself diligently to all his duties.

REFLECTIONS.

THAT we may improve by this chapter, we must observe, I. That according to the prediction of *St. Paul*, there did arise false teachers, who forbade marriage, and the use of meats, and introduced many other errors in religion, not only in the primitive church, but likewise in the following ages. This should

should convince us how important it is to avoid error and superstition, and never to depart from the doctrine of the Gospel; but it must likewise be remembered, that what St. *Paul* here says, does by no means authorize libertinism and sensuality; and that God's creatures must be used with moderation and with thanksgiving. II. As the impostors St. *Paul* speaks of were carnal men, whose aim was to grow rich and enjoy the conveniencies of life, and who made religion subservient to their interests; St. *Paul* assures *Timothy* that true piety is the most profitable thing in the world, *having the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come*; and that God, who takes care of all men, does particularly provide for his faithful servants. This is an undoubted truth, and teaches us, that the only way to be happy in this life, and in that which is to come, is the practice of solid piety. III. St. *Paul* shews in this chapter that it is the duty of the ministers of the Gospel, to preach pure doctrine; to be always exercised in godliness, to behave in such a manner as none may have any reason to despise them; to be patterns of faith, holiness, purity, and all kind of virtues, both in their words and in their actions; to cultivate their gifts by labour and study, and by a diligent application to the functions of their office, so that all the world may be witness of their progress, and *that they may save themselves, and those who hear them*. These lessons of instruction, as they first regard pastors, and demand their most serious attention; so they should engage all Christians to make a good use of the ministry of their spiritual guides; and to beseech God that he would sanctify those who exercise this holy office, that they may discharge all these duties to the glory of God, and to the edification of his church.

CHAP. V.

I. ST. *Paul* directs *Timothy* how to conduct himself in reproofing and admonishing, and in receiving widows

widows that were maintained at the expence of the church, and who served in several charitable employments; upon which occasion he shews the duty of women, and the faults they are to avoid. II. He speaks next of the duty of honouring and maintaining pastors, and what rules are to be observed when they were accused, or when any one was to be ordained to that office.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WHAT is said in this chapter, is a lesson to the pastors of the church, to dispense their exhortations with prudence, suiting them to the persons to whom they are addressed, and to behave in every respect with discretion, uprightness, and integrity. II. The rules which *St. Paul* prescribes concerning widows who were in the service of the church, shew that every thing should be done with order in the church of *Christ*, particularly works of charity; that the distribution of alms, and the care of holy things, should be committed to none but persons of gravity and piety; and that those who can assist their poor relations, are under an obligation to do it. III. We see here, that aged women ought to apply themselves to works of piety and charity, and to give young women good instructions, and set them good example: and that to be idle, busy-bodies, tattlers, and to gad from house to house, is a life unworthy of Christian women, whom God requires to be discreet, modest, chaste, and retired, and to take care of their families. IV. The order *St. Paul* gives *Timothy*, to reprove publickly those that sin, confirms the necessity of church discipline and publick censures. Lastly, We may gather from this whole chapter, that the ministry is a very important office; that it requires a great deal of prudence, knowledge, and integrity; that therefore we ought to be very circumspect and deliberate in admitting persons to so holy a ministry; as on the other hand we should not lightly accuse or condemn those who exercise it.

CHAP. VI.

MENTION is made in this chapter, I. Of the duties of servants towards their masters: II. Of false teachers, who taught a different doctrine from that of St. *Paul*, and of the mischief they caused in the church, by raising disputes in it. III. And because these false teachers acted only with a view to their interest, St. *Paul* speaks of content of mind, and of the evils that proceed from the love of riches. IV. He calls upon *Timothy* with great earnestness to observe all he had directed him, to preserve purity of doctrine, and to shun vain disputes.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE care St. *Paul* takes to set forth the duty of servants, after that of pastors, shews, that God desires the salvation of all, and that he has no respect to the difference of mens condition. This shews likewise, that servants ought to be faithful, and in subjection to their masters, and to consider, that if in the time of St. *Paul*, the slaves, whose masters were heathens, were obliged to this duty, those who serve Christian masters are under a much stricter obligation. II. We should seriously reflect upon what is here said about nice and useles questions and disputes, and against those who give way to them, whom the apostle describes as full of pride, men of corrupt hearts, who occasioned mischiefs innumerable in the church. This should inspire teachers, and all Christians, with an extreme aversion to disputes of this kind; and engage them as St. *Paul* advises, to avoid those who raise them, and those who encourage them. III. A third instruction contained in this chapter is, *That godliness with contentment is great gain: That we brought nothing into this world, and that it is certain we can carry nothing out: That having food and raiment, we ought to be therewith content.* This is a lesson of great importance, and tends very much to produce

duce tranquillity of mind, and to secure us from those temptations which a neglect of this rule exposes us to. IV. The apostle confirms this lesson by reminding us, *That the love of money is the root of all evil ; that they that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.* This is a truth which is taught us by the word of God, and confirmed by every day's experience. Let us never forget this lesson ; let us always remember these excellent and wholesome instructions. V. St. Paul exhorts those who have worldly goods, not to be proud, not to trust in uncertain riches, but to be rich in good works, that they may lay up treasure for the time to come, and obtain everlasting life. These are duties which the Gospel requires of all Christians who have this world's goods, which they ought never to forget. Lastly, the grave and solemn manner in which St. Paul requires Timothy to fulfil all the duties of his office, and to keep faithfully that which was committed to his care, should engage all those that exercise the holy ministry to redouble their zeal, and to acquit themselves of their duty with such fidelity, that *having fought the good fight of faith, they may lay hold on eternal life, and be without rebuke until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ ; who in due time shall be manifested to be the blessed and only potentate, King of kings, and Lord of lords : who only hath immortality ; dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto ; whom no man hath seen, nor can see ; to whom be honour and power everlasting.* Amen.

The End of the First Epistle of St. PAUL to TIMOTHY.

THE
SECOND EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL

TO
TIMOTHY.

ARGUMENT.

The apostle St. Paul writ this Epistle in the year of Christ sixty-six, whilst he was the second time prisoner at Rome, and a little before he suffered martyrdom. In this Epistle he renews the exhortations he had before addressed to Timothy, charging him faithfully to discharge with still greater zeal the duties of his office.

CHAP. I.

I. **I**N this chapter St. Paul expresses his tender affection to *Timothy*, whose faith and godliness he commends. II. He exhorts him to double his zeal, and not to be discouraged by the afflictions to which the faithful, and especially the ministers of the Gospel, were exposed; and always to retain the pure doctrine of *Jesus Christ*. III. He complains of those that had forsaken him, and prays to God for the family of *Onesiphorus*, which took care of him when he was a prisoner at *Rome*.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

ST. *Paul's* commendation, at the beginning of this Epistle, of the piety which *Timothy* had shewn even from his youth, and in which he was educated by his mother and grandmother, is a proof of the great happiness of a Christian education; and that those parents who inspire their children with holiness, do bestow upon them the greatest of all blessings. But St. *Paul's* exhortation to *Timothy*, to stir up more and more the gift of God which was in him, and to persevere in the faith, do likewise shew, that those who have been religiously educated, and have made a happy beginning, ought carefully to preserve that heavenly gift, endeavour to increase it, and make a constant profession of piety, without ever being ashamed of it, or without being discouraged by the opposition they meet with. All Christians ought to consider these things, but it does, in a more particular manner, concern the ministers of the Gospel: and the example of *Timothy* teaches us, that it is a most valuable blessing to the church, when God sets over it pastors, who, like *Timothy*, have lived in piety from their youth, and whose zeal is always increasing. Lastly, The prayers which the apostle makes for *Onesiphorus*, who had not forsaken him, like others, but had comforted him in his imprisonment, shew, that it is a work very acceptable to God to relieve the afflicted, and especially such as suffer for the Gospel; and that those who have done it will receive their reward, and find mercy from the Lord at the last day.

CHAP. II.

I. ST. *Paul* exhorts *Timothy* to undergo with courage the troubles that attended the exercise of his office. II. He recommends to him, to preach the pure word of God, and to oppose idle and profane disputes, which he represents the pernicious consequences

sequences of, by comparing them to a gangrene, which spreads more and more, and by shewing that they were likely to engage men in fatal errors, as it happened to certain false teachers at that time, who denied the resurrection. III. The apostle adds, that nevertheless there were always some faithful teachers and Christians, that kept themselves free from these errors; and that the character which they are known by, is their abstaining from sin. IV. And lastly, He orders *Timothy* to avoid youthful lusts, to refrain disputes, and labour to bring back those that were fallen into error.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT is contained in this chapter directly concerns the ministers of the Gospel. They may here see, that their office calls them to serve *Christ* faithfully, and to this end to devote themselves to him entirely, without engaging him in the business of this life; to bear the fatigue attending their office; to promote the edification of the church; to banish error and disputes; and to cause truth, piety, and concord to reign in it; to preserve peace with all those who call upon the Lord with a pure heart; and lastly, to endeavour with zeal, meekness, and patience, to recover those that are engaged in error or vice. Besides these reflections, which concern the rulers of the church in particular, we should make these three general remarks; first, that the character of Christians which we bear, and the vow we made of renouncing the world, in order to devote ourselves to the service of *Christ*, calls upon us to renounce every thing that may hinder us from being faithful to him; and obliges us to do and to suffer every thing for the love of him; remembering, that *if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he will also deny us*. Secondly, We see, moreover, in this chapter, that it is dangerous to hearken to those who disturb the peace of the church, and spread errors therein; and that therefore every one ought

to be upon his guard, and never depart from the doctrine which is taught in the word of God, and to be always animated with a spirit of unity and peace. Lastly, All Christians should carefully remember these words of *St. Paul*, which contain at one view the substance of religion, *viz. That the Lord knoweth them that are his*; that the tokens by which he knows them is, that they *depart from iniquity*; that in the church, there are vessels of honour, and vessels of dishonour; that is to say, there are good and bad men; and that *if a man purge himself from sin, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.*

CHAP. III.

I. *ST. Paul* foretels that great corruption would creep into the church, by the means of false teachers and persons who would corrupt the doctrine and practice of Christianity. II. He exhorts *Timothy* to shun such people, whose destruction he foretels; to imitate his conduct and patience under afflictions, and chiefly to adhere to the doctrine contained in the Holy Scriptures, the divine authority and usefulness of which he confirms.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THE prophecy which we read in this chapter, and which shews that in the latter days there would be perilous times, is very remarkable. It was fulfilled during the lives of the apostles, and in the succeeding ages; since several dangerous sects sprung up, who, together with damnable errors, introduced impiety and licentiousness. This prophecy extends even to this time, since we see so many Christians, who have nothing but the form of godliness, denying the power thereof, being engaged in wickedness and disorders of every kind. Since this great corruption was foretold we should not be staggered at it; on the contrary, we ought to be thereby the more confirmed in the truth.

God has thought fit to warn us of it, that we may not suffer ourselves to be drawn away by evil examples; but that following the exhortation of *St. Paul*, we should resist sin, and flee from those that are guilty of it. This is the duty of all Christians, and particularly of the ministers of the Gospel. II. This chapter teaches us, that if whilst we do our duty, by withstanding vice and impiety, we should be exposed to the contradiction of sinners, there is nothing more will befall us than what formerly happened to *Moses*, to *St. Paul*, and most of the saints; because, as *St. Paul* observes on this occasion, *those that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*. But this should be so far from discouraging us, that it ought to animate us the more in the discharge of our duty. Lastly, The apostle teaches us, that the way to secure ourselves and others from sin and error, is never to depart from the holy Scriptures, which alone are able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith in *Christ Jesus*. And those who are called into the church to guide and instruct others, should take notice that it was by reading and meditating on these divine books, that *Timothy* became so excellent a minister of *Christ*; and in them they will find, at *St. Paul* says, every thing necessary to qualify them for the discharge of their holy office.

CHAP. IV.

I. *St. Paul* continues to exhort *Timothy* with great earnestness to discharge all the duties of his office. And, II. That he may the more effectually engage him thereto, he tells him his death was drawing near; for which he expresses great joy, and a firm hope of the glory of heaven. III. He orders *Timothy* to come and see him as soon as possible, complains of those who had forsaken him, and concludes this Epistle with salutations and affectionate wishes.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THOSE whom God calls to the holy ministry, have, in this chapter, powerful motives to discharge all the parts of their duty, and especially to preach the word of God, to reprove, and in all seasons to exhort with zeal, with evidence, and with meekness. This they are engaged to do by those grave admonitions which *St. Paul* addresses to *Timothy*, charging him before God, and from the consideration of the last judgment, to redouble his zeal and watchfulness. II. *St. Paul* here informs the ministers of the Gospel, that times of danger often come, when men dislike the purity and simplicity of the Christian doctrine, cannot bear the truth, and love to hear such doctrines as flatter their curiosity, and especially their passions. Which shews, that those who are called to instruct others, have need of the utmost prudence and fidelity to discharge the duties of their office in a proper manner, and with good success. III. The joy and confidence which this apostle shewed at the time he was going to suffer martyrdom, is a proof to us of the great courage and constancy wherewith those that have served God faithfully are animated when their death draws near. And since *St. Paul* declares, that the crown of righteousness was reserved not only for him, but likewise for all those who love the appearance of their Lord and Saviour, we ought always to imitate this apostle in the zeal and love which he testified for *Christ*; we ought to fight the good fight, to finish our course, and to keep the faith, even to the end. IV. The complaints *St. Paul* makes against those who had forsaken him, and those who had used him ill, shew, that there have been at all times, some who have opposed the faithful servants of God; and that even in the bosom of the church there are worldly men, who love the present world better than *Christ*; as also fearful and cowardly persons, that durst not make an open profession of piety, nor stand by those who maintain it. Lastly, We see by what *St. Paul* here says of what hap-

happened to him at *Rome*, that though the faithful are without support in respect to the world, yet that God never forsakes them in trials and in dangers, but that he strengthens them, and after having delivered them from all evil, he will save them in his heavenly kingdom.

The End of the Second Epistle of St. PAUL to TIMOTHY.

THE
EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL

TO
TITUS.

ARGUMENT.

It is thought St. Paul writ this Epistle about the year of Christ sixty-four, to Titus, whom he had left in the island of Crete, now called Candia, to take care of the churches that were there.

CHAP. I.

THIS chapter has two parts. I. St. Paul orders Titus to appoint pastors in all the churches of the island of Crete, and describes the qualities with which they ought to be endowed. II. He speaks of certain Jewish doctors that added many trifling questions and fables to the doctrines of the Gospel, particularly with regard to the use of meats; and who were, besides this, of a vicious disposition, like most of the inhabitants of the isle of Crete.

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

SINCE St. *Paul* directs *Titus* to regulate all things in the churches of *Crete*, and particularly to settle pastors there, it appears from hence, that it is the will of God that order should be observed in the church: and particularly, that in every place where there are Christians, there should be pastors, their office being of divine institution, and of absolute necessity; but the great precaution which he advises him to use in the choice of those ministers he was to appoint, proves, that that sacred employment ought to be entrusted to none but persons without reproach, and of an exemplary life, and who have withal the necessary gifts to teach, and preserve the purity of the evangelical doctrine against such as would corrupt it. We see, besides, that it is the duty of the ministers of *Christ* to set themselves against false teachers, and such as might seduce Christians, and engage them in error or in sin. The apostle's reflection upon the vicious dispositions of the inhabitants of the isle of *Crete*, whom he represents as addicted to lying, wickedness, sloth, and sensuality, shews, that it is very difficult for such as have an evil heart, and vicious inclinations, to become true disciples of *Christ*; but that, however, the servants of God ought to neglect nothing to bring them to the faith. Lastly, We ought seriously to reflect upon the description the apostle here makes of the false teachers and wicked Christians he is there speaking of; saying, *They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him; being abominable, disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.* These words are an exact representation of many false Christians, who live in the communion of the church; and teach us, that the profession of religion, and faith in God, do not avail those that live in disobedience; and, as they renounce God by their works, he will not own them for his.

CHAP. II.

ST. Paul does two things in this chapter: I. He sets forth the duties of old men and women; of young men and servants; and charges *Titus* to be himself to all these, and especially to young people, an example of wisdom and virtue. II. He gives us here an excellent abridgment of the Christian doctrine, and shews what is the design of it.

REFLECTIONS.

I. **THIS** chapter teaches us, in general, that it is the great duty of pastors to form the minds of men to piety and holiness, and carefully to instruct all men in the duties peculiar to their station and calling. II. Aged persons may from hence learn to be sober, grave, pious, and abounding in charity; Christian women to live likewise in sobriety; to avoid slander; to love their husbands; to take care of their children and family: young people to be moderate, temperate, chaste, and regular in their whole behaviour; and servants to be subject to their masters, and serve them with fidelity. III. *St. Paul's* earnest address to *Titus*, to be a pattern to others of purity, gravity, and good works, is an argument that those who undertake to exhort and instruct others, should first practise what they teach, and set men an example of all kind of virtues. IV. But we ought, all of us in general, carefully to attend to the summary of the Christian doctrine *St. Paul* gives us in this chapter, in which he says, that the grace of God, that has been manifested by *Jesus Christ*, calls us to renounce, not only ungodliness, and direct crimes, but likewise to renounce unlawful desires, and the love of the world, and to live in temperance and purity with respect to ourselves, in justice towards our neighbour, and in piety towards God; and that it is only by living thus, that we may expect with confidence the last and glorious coming of the great God and Saviour *Jesus Christ*. This doctrine the ministers of the Gospel

Gospel should preach, and this should be the rule of every Christian's conduct: This too is the end and design of *Christ's* coming, and of his death; since, as *St. Paul* says, he gave himself for us, that he might *redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

CHAP. III.

I. *St. Paul* directs Christians to submit themselves to the higher powers, to slander no body, and to abound in meekness and charity, even towards those who were enemies of the Christian Religion; and to remember, that God in his great mercy had saved them, when they likewise lived in all kind of irregularities. II. He orders *Titus* to recommend particularly the practice of good works to those who had embraced Christianity; to oppose such as raised disputes in the church by foolish questions; and to shun those whom formed sects and parties, and broached false and dangerous doctrines; and he concludes with some directions which he gives to *Titus*.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter teaches us, I. To be subject to kings and magistrates, to avoid calumny and disputes, and to behave with perfect meekness towards all. II. *St. Paul* teaches us here, that *God has saved us, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy,—through Jesus Christ our Saviour. That being justified by his grace, we may be made heirs according to the hope of everlasting life.* A most important doctrine, which ought to produce in us sentiments of profound humility, and unfeigned thanks to God. III. The apostle in this chapter declares in the most positive manner, that there is nothing more certain, nor more important, nor which the ministers of the Gospel ought to inculcate and recommend with more earnestness, than this, that *they which have believed in God, should be careful to maintain good works:*

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These things being good and profitable unto men. These words shew, that the practice of good works is the most indispensable duty of Christianity, and the distinguishing mark of a true Christian. Finally, We see here, that when there are persons in the church who teach dangerous doctrines, and who form sects and parties therein, we are to admonish them; and, if they continue to disturb the peace of the church, we are not to own them for its members, nor to have any communication with them. This is the only method prescribed by *Christ* and his apostles whereby to oppose error, and preserve in the church purity of faith.

The End of the Epistle of St. PAUL to TITUS.

THE
EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL
TO
PHILEMON.

ARGUMENT.

St. Paul wrote this Epistle when he was a prisoner at Rome the first time, about the year of Christ sixty-one, the subject of which was as follows: Philemon, who was of the city of Colosse, and who, after St. Paul had converted him to Christianity, exercised his ministry in that city with great success, had a slave, named Onesimus, who ran away from him; and, coming to Rome, met with St. Paul, who converted him to the Christian Religion; after which he sent him back to Philemon, with a letter of recommendation, in which he intreats him to forgive Onesimus, and to receive him as a brother in Jesus Christ.

REFLECTIONS.

WE see in this Epistle, I. That *Onesimus* coming to Rome, after he had left his master *Philemon*, *St. Paul* laboured to convert this fugitive slave, and had the comfort to bring him over to the Christian Faith. Thus this apostle embraced all occasions of promoting the glory of God, and the salvation of men; as true Christians are always ready to gain souls

souls to God, and to recover sinners from the error of their ways. II. The apostle, after he had converted *Onesimus*, sent him back to his master, because this slave's conversion no way deprived *Philemon* of his right over him; he intreated him to forgive him, and even offered to pay him all that *Onesimus* owed him, and make satisfaction for all the wrong he might have done him. This whole proceeding of *St. Paul*, is a proof of his charity, meekness, justice, and integrity. Such is the character of good men; they are always concerned for those who stand in need of their assistance, especially for pious and godly men, or sinners who return to their duty; and they are also animated with a spirit of justice and equity, and desire to render to all their due. We may likewise make this farther reflection, that if *St. Paul* offered to satisfy *Philemon* for what *Onesimus* owed him, though he was not obliged in strictness to do it; those who have done any wrong to others, are much more obliged to make it good. Lastly, The order which *St. Paul* gives *Philemon*, to receive *Onesimus* no longer as a slave, but as a brother, shews, that though Christianity does not destroy the different relations among men, but supposes and admits a difference of condition; yet it makes all men equal before God, and with respect to eternal salvation. It appears likewise from hence, that Christian masters ought to consider their servants as their brethren in *Christ Jesus*, and to treat them with all mildness and humanity.

THE
EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL.
TO THE
HEBREWS.

ARGUMENT.

There is reason to believe St. Paul wrote this Epistle in the year of our Lord sixty-one, being a prisoner at Rome, and addressed it to the Hebrews, that is to say, to the Jews that were converted to Christianity. His design is, to confirm them in the profession of the Gospel, and in holiness, and to prevent them from being drawn away by the fondness they might still have for the Jewish religion and worship, or by the persecutions which Christians were exposed to, and the allurements of sin; for which purpose he shews, that Christ is greater than Moses, that the Gospel is more excellent than the law, and that the ceremonies and sacrifices of the law had had their accomplishment in Jesus Christ, and were consequently abolished by his coming, and by his sacrifice. This is the subject of the first ten chapters. In the three last, he exhorts the Hebrews to perseverance in the faith, to patience under afflictions, and to the most important duties of religion.

CHAP. I.

ST. Paul teaches in this chapter, that God had revealed himself to men by *Jesus Christ*, in a more perfect manner than he had ever done before. He
proves

proves the excellency of the Gospel, by the infinite dignity of *Jesus Christ*, the Son of God; shewing that he was exalted to supreme glory in heaven, and that he is more excellent than the angels; and he confirms the divinity of his person.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

I. The first truth which *St. Paul* teaches in this Epistle, is, that *Jesus Christ* is not a mere man, or only a great prophet, or even an angel; but that he is infinitely above the prophets, and even the angels, being the only Son of God; that by him the world was made; that God has set him on his right hand; and that all the angels worship him as their Lord. Since *St. Paul* first settles this doctrine of our Lord's divinity, and from thence proves the excellence of the Christian Religion, it evidently appears, that our whole religion is founded on this doctrine; and, therefore, that all Christians ought to believe and embrace it. II. *St. Paul* tells us, that God has spoken to us in these last days by his Son; which engages us to praise God, that we have the advantage of living under the most perfect of all dispensations, and in the happy times of the Gospel. III. Since God has revealed his will to us by his own Son, and manifested himself in a more perfect manner than he had done before, it was our indispensable duty to improve the blessing of the covenant of grace, and to surpass in holiness those who lived before the coming of *Jesus Christ*. Lastly, The consideration of our Lord's divinity, and of the supreme power to which he is exalted in heaven, should lead us to worship him, to hope in him, and to obey the Gospel we received from him, as *St. Paul* proves in the following chapter.

CHAP. II.

I. *ST. Paul* exhorts the *Hebrews* to continue steadfast in the profession of the Gospel, which had been preached to them by *Jesus Christ* and the apostles, and confirmed

confirmed by the gifts of the Holy Ghost. II. He shews for this purpose, that though *Jesus* was man, and humbled himself even unto death, yet all things are made subject unto him; and that God has raised him to heavenly glory after his sufferings. III. He shews, in the last place, that God was pleased that our Lord should take our nature and suffer, that he might redeem men from the power of the devil, and of death, and that the faithful might learn from his example not to be afraid of afflictions.

REFLECTIONS.

ST. *Paul* teaches us here, I. That the Gospel having been preached by *Jesus Christ* and the apostles, and confirmed by the gifts of the Holy Ghost, we have undeniable proofs of the divinity of the Christian doctrine; and that therefore we should be altogether inexcusable, and shall not escape the vengeance of God, if we neglect this great salvation that is offered to us, and if we do not openly profess the truth, and sincerely obey the Gospel. II. The consideration of the glory and power wherewith *Christ* was invested after his humiliation and death, teaches us, that the sufferings to which the faithful are exposed, will not hinder them from attaining to glory; it being the will of God, to bring them to glory the same way that *Christ* himself arrived at it. III. We ought likewise to consider, that the Son of God took upon him the nature of man, and was lower than the angels for a time, that through the goodness of God he might die for all men, make an atonement for their sins, and destroy the empire of the devil, and of death. This is a doctrine which should fill us with joy, and a firm confidence in God through *Christ*, and which likewise very strongly engages us to live as his redeemed, and to flee from sin, lest we should fall again under the power of the devil, and of death, from which our Lord came to deliver us.

CHAP. III.

THE apostle does two things in this chapter: I.

He shews, that *Christ* was far above *Moses* since *Moses* was only a servant in the house of God; whereas *Christ*, as a Son, is the Lord and master of it: II. He exhorts the *Hebrews* to obey the Gospel, and not to imitate the *Israelites*, who were excluded from the land of *Canaan*, and who died in the wilderness, because of their rebellion and unbelief.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WHAT St. *Paul* says in this chapter, of the excellency of the person and ministry of *Christ* above the person and ministry of *Moses*, should make us sensible of the obligations which Christians lie under of adhering to *Christ* by a sincere obedience and true faith, as it proves the greatness of the crime which those are guilty of who fall into disobedience and unbelief. II. We are to consider, that the ancient *Israelites*, for their rebellion and unbelief when *Moses* caused them to hear the voice of God, died in the wilderness; and God swore that they should not enter into the rest which was prepared in the land of *Canaan* for the people of *Israel*. It is thus God resolves to exclude from rest in heaven those whose hearts wander from the right way, and who provoke him by their rebellion and obdurateness. This is a powerful engagement to be attentive, and submit to the Gospel, and to improve the day of grace, as St. *Paul* speaks in this serious exhortation; *To day if you will hear the voice of God, harden not your hearts: Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God: but exhort one another daily, whilst the time and day of grace lasts, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

CHAP. IV.

I. **ST.** *Paul* continues to shew, that as the disobedient *Israelites* did not enter into the land of *Canaan*, so neither shall the unbelieving Christians enter into the kingdom of heaven. For this purpose he observes, that what *David* says in the *Psalms*, of the people's entering into God's rest, is not so much to be understood of the land of *Canaan*, as of the true rest, which consists in the enjoyment of the salvation that *Christ* has obtained for us. II. He concludes from thence, that we ought to labour to enter into this rest: He declares, that unbelievers shall not escape those threatenings which the word of God has denounced against them, since his word is true, and divine, and powerful. And lastly, To encourage the *Hebrews* to persevere in the Christian profession, and to be constant under afflictions, he represents that *Jesus Christ* is a merciful High Priest, who is ascended into heaven; and who having himself suffered, is inclined to have compassion upon our infirmities, and to assist us in all our wants.

REFLECTIONS.

WE learn from this chapter, I. That those who despise and neglect the promises of God, shall be deprived of them; and that the word of God is of no use, when it is not attended with faith in those that hear it; wherefore all those to whom this word is preached, and these promises are made, should be careful to receive them with obedience of faith. II. *St. Paul* teaches us, that there is a rest which *Christ* has acquired for us, and which is much more excellent than that which was promised to the *Israelites* in the land of *Canaan*; and as the *Israelites* could not enter into the rest of the land of *Canaan* because of their infidelity and rebellion, so those who do not obey *Jesus Christ*, and who despise his Gospel, will be deprived of everlasting rest. The consequence *St. Paul* would

have us draw from hence, is to use our utmost endeavours to enter into that rest, lest we should fall into the like rebellion. III. To engage us to this duty, the apostle represents to us, that the word of God is true, and powerful, and that the threatenings of the Gospel are no less certain; that they will be infallibly executed, and that we shall not be able to escape from him with whom we have to do, since all things are naked and open in his sight. Lastly, Since we know that *Jesus* our great High Priest, entered into heaven after he had been himself tempted in all things like unto us, sin only excepted, and that he is also a gracious and merciful High Priest; we have the most powerful motives to hold fast the profession we make of believing in him, to trust in his promises, and to come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in the time of need.

CHAP. V.

ST. *Paul*, treating of the priesthood of *Jesus Christ*, shews, I. That he was called by God to the office of a priest, which he proves by two prophecies, taken out of the Book of Psalms, and particularly by that which foretels that the Messiah should be a high-priest after the order of *Melchisedec*. II. He says next, that *Christ* performed the functions of a priest, when he suffered death for the salvation of men. III. And lastly, When he is going to speak of the priesthood of our Lord, and of the resemblance there was between him and *Melchisedec*, he reproaches the *Hebrews* with the small progress they had made in the knowledge of the mysteries of religion, which he was going to explain to them.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THIS chapter teaches us, that *Christ* was appointed by God to be our high-priest, and that under this character he offered up himself a sacrifice for the sins of mankind. This engages us to look upon *Jesus*

Christ as the author of our salvation, who has rendered God propitious and favourable to us; but this very doctrine should likewise convince us of our obligation to submit ourselves to the Gospel, by a sincere obedience; since, as *St. Paul* says, *Christ became the author of eternal salvation to those only that obey him.*

II. The second reflection relates to the sufferings of *Christ*, which *St. Paul* describes, saying, our Lord, in the days of his flesh, offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death; and was heard, in that he feared, having learnt obedience by the things which he suffered. *St. Paul* said this, not only to shew that *Jesus Christ* discharged on earth the office of a high-priest; but also to comfort Christians in affliction and persecution. The children of God may discover, from what happened to our Lord, that when they are exposed to sufferings, they are like their Saviour; that God sends them afflictions, to teach them patience and obedience, and to call upon him with great zeal; and that God will hear them and deliver them, when they offer up their prayers to him in their necessities.

III. We are to consider that if the apostle reproached the *Hebrews* for being so little advanced in knowledge, that they still needed to be taught the first principles of Christianity, we should be much more ashamed to deserve the like reproaches, considering the time that is employed in instructing us; wherefore we ought to exert ourselves in acquiring new light, and in daily making greater progress in the knowledge of religion.

CHAP. VI.

ST. *Paul* tells the *Hebrews*, that it was not his intention to teach them the first rudiments of religion, but that he designed to propose to them more sublime doctrines, discoursing of the similitude which there was between *Christ* and *Melchisedec*, and the ancient priests. II. To excite them to make a progress in the knowledge of the mysteries of the Gospel, he sets before

before them the unhappiness of those who neglecting to confirm themselves in the faith, and despising the knowledge and graces they have received from God, do not produce the fruits which God expects from them, and at last renounce the truth and forsake *Christ*. III. He tells the *Hebrews*, that the reason why he spake to them in this manner, was to awaken their zeal, since he was convinced that they would not expose themselves to the like misfortunes. IV. And lastly, To strengthen their faith, he represents to them the steadiness of God's promises, by the example of *Abraham*, and the certainty of that hope which *Christ's* entrance into heaven gives all believers.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WE ought to take great notice of the first verses of this chapter, in which *St. Paul* shews us what are the fundamental articles of religion, *viz.* The doctrine of faith in God; of repentance and forsaking sin; of baptism; of the resurrection of the dead; and of the last judgment. Wherefore these are the doctrines which we should all firmly believe, and which are necessary to salvation. II. The apostle teaches us, that it is not enough to know these doctrines, but that Christians ought to aim at greater perfection, and to join to the knowledge of these essential truths, that of other truths, which serve to give light to religion, and to confirm the faith. *St. Paul* even intimates, that when we neglect to improve in knowledge, we are in great danger of losing all relish for the truths of religion, to renounce the faith, and fall into infidelity. III. He declares in this chapter, that those who have been once enlightened, and have tasted the good word of God, and the heavenly gift; if they renounce the truth and godliness, cannot repent, at least without extreme difficulty, and if they persevere in that state must perish. This should make us extremely afraid to sin against light, to despise the word of God, and to resist the workings of his grace,
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lest we should bring upon ourselves the curse which *St. Paul* denounces against those who abuse the grace of God; which he represents by a piece of ground that is duly cultivated, and watered with frequent rains, and bears nothing but thorns and briars, and is therefore cursed, and appointed to be burned. IV. And lastly, Those who believe the Gospel, and manifest the sincerity of their faith by their patience and charity, may for their comfort and encouragement consider what the apostle says here, that *God is not unrighteous, to forget their work and labour of love*; that his promises are unchangeable, having been made with an oath, and confirmed by *Christ's* exaltation into heaven, where he is entered as our forerunner. This is the hope of the faithful, which, as an anchor of the soul, sure, and steadfast, penetrates even into heaven, and makes them unmoveable in the midst of the trials and afflictions to which they are exposed.

CHAP. VII.

IN this chapter *St. Paul* shews the excellency of the priesthood of *Jesus Christ*, by considering him as a priest after the order of *Melchisedec*. For which end he observes, I. That *Melchisedec* was a priest after a different manner from the *Jewish* priests. This appears, because he was a king, and because the scripture does not relate his genealogy, nor say any thing either of his predecessors, or of his successors after his death; in which he was a type of *Jesus Christ*, who is eternal, and our only high-priest. The apostle adds, that *Melchisedec* was superior to *Abraham*, that patriarch having paid him tithes of the spoil. II. *St. Paul* observes farther, that *Christ* was not of the family of *Aaron*, out of which the *Jewish* priests were chosen, and that God had promised with an oath that the priesthood according to *Melchisedec* was to be everlasting. From all these considerations *St. Paul* would infer, that the priesthood of the Messiah was of a quite different nature from that of the *Jewish* priests;

priests; that he was to be both king and priest together, and the only priest; that his sacrifice was to be only one, and that most perfect; and that, consequently, the Levitical priesthood was to be abolished. III. The apostle shews, about the end of the chapter, that *Christ* infinitely excelled the *Jewish* priests by his perfect holiness.

REFLECTIONS.

THE principal observation that we are to make upon this whole chapter, is to acknowledge and admire the infinite wisdom of God, who had so clearly signified in the ancient prophecies what the Messiah was to be, as St. *Paul* shews, by proving so evidently out of the law itself, and from the Old Testament, that the Levitical worship and priesthood were to be abolished by the sacrifice and oblation of our Lord *Jesus Christ*. This ought powerfully to convince us of the truth of the Gospel, and stir us up to search into and meditate upon the Scriptures, and particularly the prophets, in which we find such convincing proofs of the divinity of the Christian doctrine. And since the design of this whole chapter is to instruct us in the perfection and efficacy of the sacrifice of *Christ*, we cannot doubt but that we shall find in him all that is necessary to obtain the pardon of our sins, and to purify our souls; and that having for our priest and our king one that is perfectly holy, and exalted above the heavens, he will be able to save to the utmost all those that come to God by him.

CHAP. VIII.

THE apostle does two things. I. He goes on to shew, that *Christ* was superior to the *Jewish* priests upon the following account: That having been exalted to heaven, he is the minister and high priest of the heavenly sanctuary, whereas the ancient priests were no more than ministers of the earthly sanctuary. II. With the same view he shews, that God had foretold

foretold by the prophet *Jeremiah*, that the covenant which he formerly made with the *Israelites* should be abolished, and that he would enter into a more excellent one with mankind, in which he would pardon their sins, and sanctify them by his spirit.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter engages us to make the three following reflections. I. That we have a great high priest in the heavens, set at the right hand of the Divine Majesty. This entrance of *Christ* into heaven, is the greatest proof of the perfection and efficacy of his sacrifice, and should likewise assure us, that he has procured all true believers a right to the heavenly glory, and that he will one day exalt them to it. II. The second reflection relates to the happiness we have of being admitted into the new covenant, which God had promised to make with men at the coming of the Messiah, for which we owe him our continual gratitude and thankfulness. III. In the third place, since the end which God proposed to himself by this covenant was to put his laws in our heart, to fill us all with the knowledge and fear of him, and to forgive us our sins; we should remember that this covenant will be useless with respect to us, unless we on our part make suitable returns, and faithfully discharge those duties which our covenant with him requires of us; this we learn from the example of the *Jews*, who did not keep the covenant of the Lord, and who for that reason, were rejected by him. Lastly, Since God has promised to write his holy laws in our hearts, and in our minds, we should beseech him, according to his promises, to increase in us his knowledge more and more, and to imprint his fear and love in our hearts by the effectual working of his grace, so that we may always be his true people, and he may be always our God.

CHAP. IX.

I. *ST. Paul* gives us a description of the ancient tabernacle, and of the service performed therein : and he observes particularly, that the high priest entered but once a year into the most holy place ; which was to shew, that the way to heaven was not yet revealed to all men. II. He informs us next, that the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the *Jews*, were types and figures of what was to happen one day ; and especially, that the entrance of the high priest into the most holy place, signified, that *Christ* would enter into heaven by his own blood ; and that by this means he would obtain for us an eternal redemption ; his blood having a power to sanctify men, which that of the legal victims wanted. III. The apostle adds, that as the ancient covenant was confirmed by the blood of the victims, so was the new, which is far more excellent, by the blood of *Christ*. IV. He concludes from all this, that the sacrifice of *Christ* is perfect, and of an infinite value ; that it must not be repeated ; and that *Christ* being once dead, there is nothing more to be expected, but that he should come at the last day to introduce the faithful into his glory.

REFLECTIONS.

THE comparison *St. Paul* makes, between the priests of the law, and *Jesus Christ*, tends chiefly to instruct us in the power and virtue of his death and sacrifice. We see here, that the blood of *Christ* has a virtue with which the legal sacrifices were not attended ; forasmuch as it opens to us the way to heaven, where our Lord is entered for us, as well as for himself ; which gives us the most glorious and exalted hopes. But *St. Paul* teaches us likewise, that this blood must sanctify and *purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living God* ; by which we see, that the sacrifice of *Christ* lays us under a necessity of labouring

labouring for our sanctification, and enables us so to do. To the same end, we must meditate upon what is said in this chapter, that the covenant of the Gospel was confirmed by the blood and death of the Son of God; by which that covenant is made firm and unchangeable in all that it contains; the duties it prescribes are altogether inviolable and sacred, and its threats, as well as its promises, will be infallibly executed. Lastly, If the sacrifice of *Christ* was only once offered, and can never be repeated; and if there remains nothing more, but his returning at the last day to save those that wait for him, and who live in godliness; it follows from thence, that there is but one only means, and one only time to obtain salvation. The only means is, to lay hold on the grace which is offered us in *Christ Jesus*; and the only time is, the time of this life; since *it is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment.*

CHAP. X.

I. **ST. Paul** shews, that the sacrifices of the law were not capable of atoning for the sins of men, nor of sanctifying them; and that nothing but the sacrifice of *Jesus Christ*, and the oblation he has once made of his body by the will of God, could produce this effect. II. Having thus proved the imperfection of the *Jewish* sacrifices, and the perfection of the sacrifices of our Lord *Jesus*, he exhorts the *Hebrews* to draw near to God with confidence, and to persevere in the profession of the Christian Religion, and in the practice of good works. III. He threatens with the most terrible punishments those who after having received the knowledge of the Gospel, fall into disobedience and apostasy. IV. And for fear persecution should stagger the faith of Christians, and make them call in question the promises of God, he exhorts them to suffer with the same confidence as they had done till then, and to wait with patience, and with stedfast faith, the fulfilling of his promises.

REFLECTIONS.

THE first part of this chapter instructs us in the perfection of the sacrifice of *Christ*, and of its effects. St. *Paul* teaches us, that our sins were expiated by the oblation *Christ* made of his body upon the cross; and that after having offered himself as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind, he is set down for ever on the right hand of God. Besides this, the apostle makes us consider the sacrifice of our Lord as an effect of his submission to the will of his Father, and of his love towards us. These are considerations which should convince us, that the work of our redemption is fully accomplished, which should inspire us with an ardent love for this gracious Saviour, and engage us likewise to submit in all things to the will of God. The second part of this chapter furnishes us with these four instructions: I. That since *Christ* has obtained for us, by his death and ascension, an entrance into heaven, we may draw near to God with full assurance, if we do it with a heart purified and cleansed from the defilements of sin. II. That we ought to persevere in the open profession of the faith, and excite one another continually to piety, charity, and all good works. III. That although the Gospel be a covenant of grace, yet it threatens with the most dreadful punishments those that shall break it; that the punishments which the Gospel denounces against those that shall despise the blood of the Son of God, and affront his Holy Spirit, are infinitely more terrible, than what was inflicted on those who violated the law of *Moses*; that there remains no more sacrifice for rebellious and apostate Christians; that they have nothing to expect but a tremendous judgment; and that it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. IV. This portion of Scripture teaches us, that Christians ought never to faint under persecutions; that they ought even to suffer with joy the loss of their goods, and the most grievous afflictions,

afflictions, since they will afterwards infallibly meet with a great reward from God; and that when they have done his will, they shall receive the fruit of his promises.

CHAP. XI.

THE apostle, to confirm the faith of the *Hebrews* in time of persecution, proposes to them the example of the patriarchs, and of the faithful of old, who, by their faith and trust in the promises of God, had been acceptable to him, and had overcome the severest trials. Upon this account he speaks of the nature of faith, and its surprising effects, and alledges the examples of *Abel*, *Enoch*, *Noah*, *Abraham*, and *Sarah*; to which he adds that of *Isaac*, *Jacob*, and *Joseph*, who, by the blessings which they gave their children and by what they said before their death, shewed that they were convinced that the promises of God should be fulfilled. He speaks of *Moses*, of the delivering the children of *Israel* out of *Egypt*, and their subduing the land of *Canaan*; and lastly, of the judges, of *Samuel*, of *David*, and of divers prophets and martyrs, who by their faith had done great miracles, and had endured with constancy all kind of torments, and even death itself.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THIS chapter instructs us in the nature of faith, and its effects. *St. Paul* teaches us here, that faith is a strong and lively persuasion of the truth of God's promises, and makes us consider them as present, though we do not yet see them; that it consists in believing that there is a God, the rewarder of those that serve him: and that we cannot be acceptable to him without faith. II. The apostle sets before us the wonderful effects of faith, in the examples of *Abel*, *Enoch*, *Noah*, the patriarchs and prophets, and other illustrious saints before *Christ*. From all these examples

examples we may observe in general, I. That in all ages from the beginning of the world, there have been holy men, who have believed in God, hoped in his promises, and have shewn the sincerity of their faith, by obeying God under the greatest difficulties. II. That faith has always been necessary, and no one was ever acceptable to God but by faith. III. That true faith has always produced these three effects, *viz.* Trust in God's promises, obedience to his commands, and constancy in afflictions. This we have an example of in the patriarch *Abraham*, who gave such extraordinary proofs of his faith, in leaving his own country, and offering up his son *Isaac*, and living as his sons did, a stranger and pilgrim upon earth, expecting a better life, and seeking a heavenly country. The same is very remarkable likewise in the conduct of *Moses*, who chose rather to suffer with the people of God, than to enjoy the advantages that were offered him in *Egypt*; as well as in the surprising constancy of the ancient martyrs under persecution, and the most cruel tortures. All these examples should enliven our faith in an extraordinary manner; inspire us with courage and zeal, and engage us to obey God in all things, and even to suffer every thing for his sake. And if we consider, as *St. Paul* observes at the end of this chapter, that we have many advantages, which those who lived before the coming of *Christ* did not enjoy, we shall find ourselves under a much stricter obligation to walk in the footsteps of those holy and illustrious servants of God, that by imitating their faith, we may, like them, arrive at perfection and salvation.

CHAP. XII.

I. *ST. Paul* exhorts the *Hebrews* to imitate the examples of the faithful under the Old Testament, which he had set before them in the preceding chapter; but above all the example of *Christ*; and to suffer afflictions with patience. II. He further observes

observes to them, that afflictions are the signs and effects of God's love, and that great advantage results from them to true believers; and encourages them by these considerations, to suffer persecution with patience. III. He exhorts them to holiness and perseverance in the faith; and advises them to shun every thing that might occasion their falling away from the grace of God, and not to suffer themselves to be seduced by sensuality. IV. He compares the manner in which the law was given on *Mount Sinai* with the manner of publishing the Gospel; by which comparison he designs to shew how severe their punishment will be, who despise the voice of *Christ*, and violate the covenant of grace.

REFLECTIONS.

WE learn from hence, I. That the examples of the saints and true believers, who formerly rendered themselves acceptable to God by their faith, patience, and obedience, has a great tendency to incite us to the same duties; especially since God has vouchsafed us greater light, and more grace than to them; and, above all, as we have before our eyes the example of *Christ*, the author and finisher of our faith. II. The apostle instructs us concerning the nature of afflictions; and though what he says relates properly to persecution for the sake of the Gospel, it may be applied to afflictions in general; since it is always true, that God chastens us in love, to render us partakers of his holiness; and that afflictions produce very happy effects in those who receive them as they ought. This doctrine engages us in the two following duties: The one is neither to faint, nor to murmur in affliction; but to suffer it patiently, and even with joy, of what kind soever it be; since it is God our Father that sends, and he only does it for our good: The other duty is, to answer the ends which God proposes to himself by afflicting us, to make a right use of the evils they undergo, and to make them

them instruments of our amendment and advancement in holiness. III. We learn in this chapter our indispensable obligation to study to live in peace and holiness, without which we cannot see the Lord. IV. The apostle advises us to labour with great diligence to preserve ourselves in the favour of God, and to take care that there be in us no seed of unbelief and rebellion that may deprive us of it! And he proves, by the example of *Esau*, that it is of the greatest importance to avoid sensuality, and not to prefer the vain and frivolous advantages of the world, before that everlasting happiness which God offers us, lest we be deprived of the blessing of our heavenly Father. Lastly, The comparison which the apostle here makes between the law and the Gospel, offers us these two reflections: The first is, that we live under a covenant much more excellent than that of the *Jews*, and therefore are strictly obliged to keep and obey it. For this reason St. *Paul* reminds us, that we are members of the Christian church, that the Gospel has been preached to us by the Son of God himself, and confirmed by his own blood; and that God, calls us to the possession of an infinite glory in heaven with all the saints and angels. The second reflection is, that though the Gospel was not published with such awful solemnity as the law was formerly upon mount *Sinai*; and though we live under a dispensation of grace and mercy; those who shall despise the voice of *Christ* have reason to fear punishments much more severe than those denounced against the *Jews*. This is what St. *Paul* expresses in these words: *If they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven. Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, that we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire.*

CHAP. XIII.

I. **I**N this last chapter, the apostle exhorts the *Hebrews* to charity, chastity, content of mind, and trust in God. II. He recommends to them to remember their spiritual guides, and not to be drawn away from the pure doctrine which he had taught them, either by those who wanted to retain the sacrifices and ceremonies of the *Mosaical* law, or by fear of persecution. III. He prescribes to them the true Christian sacrifice of praise and beneficence, and charges them to submit to their pastors. IV. And lastly, He recommends himself to their prayers, and prays for their sanctification.

REFLECTIONS.

THE duties prescribed in this chapter are the following: I. To love one another as brethren; to exercise charity and hospitality; and to take care of those that suffer persecution for the Gospel. II. To live in chastity, whether in a single or married state; to abhor all kind of uncleanness, remembering that God will one day judge the impure. III. To flee covetousness, to be content with our condition, and always to rely upon the providence of God. IV. To look upon the things of the world, and what flatters the desires of the flesh, as *St. Paul* would have Christians look upon the ceremonies of the law; and to remember that the character of Christians, and faith in *Christ* crucified, call us to take up our cross, and to live in this world as those who *have no continuing city here, but seek one to come*. V. Never to neglect the duty of praise and thanksgivings, nor that of charity and alms; both of them being most pleasing sacrifices to God. VI. *St. Paul*, as usual, charges Christians to remember their pastors, to obey them, and submit to them, as those who watch for their souls, and to pray continually for them. Lastly.
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He concludes these exhortations, and this Epistle, with this prayer in behalf of the *Hebrews*, and which we ought to make for ourselves, and for one another: *May the God of peace make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

The End of the Epistle of St. PAUL to the HEBREWS.

THE
GENERAL EPISTLE
OF
ST. JAMES.

ARGUMENT.

This Epistle and the following are called Catholic, that is to say, universal, or general, because they were wrote to Christians in general, and not to some particular persons or churches. This of St. James, is directed to the Jews of the twelve tribes, who had been long dispersed in divers countries, and had embraced the Christian religion. The design of it is, to strengthen them against persecutions, and chiefly against certain false teachers, and hypocrites, who professing themselves Christians, and boasting that they knew more than others, lived in sin and licentiousness. What time this Epistle was written is not certain.

CHAP. I.

I. **T**HE apostle here exhorts the believers to rejoice in afflictions, and to seek by prayer for that assistance which they stood in need of to support them. II. He comforts those Christians who were persecuted or despised by the world, and he exhorts the rich to be humble. III. He speaks against those, who,

who, yielding to persecution and other temptations, threw the fault on God, and maintained that he inclined men to sin; and shews, that God being perfectly holy, can incline men to nothing but good.

IV. He condemns those who contented themselves with hearing the word of God, without observing its directions; and those proud teachers, who presumed on themselves, and spoke evil of others: he shews that the religion of such persons is vain; and teaches that true religion consists in the practice of works of charity, and in renouncing the world.

REFLECTIONS after reading the chapter.

THIS chapter contains several useful instructions:

I. The first is, that afflictions, and particularly those which we suffer for the Gospel, ought to be an occasion of joy to all Christians, since they serve to try them, to render them perfect, and to make them obtain the crown of life, which God has promised to those that love him. II. That God never refuses his grace and spiritual gifts to such as ask them of him with faith, and therefore it is our own fault if we are not endowed with them. III. That those true believers, who are but in a mean station in this world, should glory in the Lord; and, on the contrary, that the rich and great ought to entertain sentiments of humility. IV. The fourth instruction, well worth our observation, is, that God is by no means the author of sin and temptation, but that sin does only proceed from ourselves; and that God is so far from being the cause of sin, that he is the author of all good, since he has regenerated us by his word, that we may become new creatures. V. St. *James* teaches us, that it is not sufficient to hear the word of God, but that our great and principal business is, to practise what it commands; to attend to it with a peaceable, meek, and teachable disposition; and with a heart free from disorderly passions. VI. And lastly, We may learn from hence, that those who think themselves holy,

and better than other men, and yet do not govern their tongue, are falsely religious; and that solid piety and true religion do chiefly consist in exercising charity towards the unhappy, and in preserving ourselves pure, so as not to be defiled by the corruptions of the world.

CHAP. II.

THIS chapter consists of two parts: I. *St. James* reproves those who had regard to rich men, and despised the poor in the assemblies of the church. He shews, that faith in *Christ Jesus* did not allow of such distinction, since God has chosen the poor, as well as the rich, to give them the kingdom of heaven; and that the evangelical law, by which we are to be judged, is the law of charity and liberty. II. In the second part, *St. James* confutes those who maintained that we can be justified by faith in *Christ*, without good works; and he shews, by the very nature of faith, and by the examples of *Abraham* and *Rahab*, that the faith which is not attended with good works is vain, and cannot save us.

REFLECTIONS.

IN the first part of this chapter we are taught, I. That Christians ought to prove by their behaviour, that they look upon one another as brethren, especially in their religious assemblies; and, in general, that no one should esteem the rich, because of his riches, nor despise the poor because of their poverty, since faith and piety may be found in the poor and mean, as well as in the rich and great; and since God has likewise chosen the poor, who are rich in faith, to make them heirs of his kingdom. This too should teach the rich not to entertain sentiments of pride, nor despise or oppress the poor. II. *St. James* teaches us, that the law of *Christ* is a law of charity, humility, and true liberty, and that God will judge us by that law. III. That he who breaks the law of God in
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one commandment, is as guilty in his sight, as if he had broken all the commandments; because all the commandments of this law proceed from God, and therefore we cannot wilfully transgress any one of them, without despising the majesty and authority of the Lawgiver; which proves, that true piety consists in the practice of our whole duty, and that the abandoning ourselves to one sin only, and the continuing in one evil habit, is sufficient to exclude us from salvation. In the next place, it greatly concerns us to observe what St. *James* teaches concerning justification, in the second part of this chapter, and with what strength of argument he disproves the impious doctrine of those, who held that we are justified by faith without good works. The apostle shews, that true faith is necessarily attended with good works, and that the faith which does not produce good works is vain and dead; this he confirms by the example of *Abraham*, who manifested the sincerity of his faith by his obedience to God, in offering his son *Isaac*; as also, by the example of *Rahab*, who, by receiving the spies sent by *Joshua* to *Jericho*, shewed that she was firmly persuaded God would give the land of *Canaan* to the children of *Israel*. From hence we may gather, that those who neglect good works, and do not prove their faith by a holy life, and by obedience to God's commands, are without true faith, and can by no means be justified, nor partake of salvation.

CHAP. III.

I. ST. *James* forbids Christians to set up themselves for teachers, and masters over others, or to condemn or speak evil of other persons; and he represents what mischiefs and disorders the tongue may produce. II. He observes next, that meekness, forbearance, and love of peace, are the tokens by which true Christians are to be distinguished; and that herein lies the difference between true and false wisdom.

dom. We must observe that what *St. James* says here, relates to certain persons, who thought themselves more knowing and more perfect than others, who condemned with great pride and severity those that were not of their opinion, and thereby disturbed the peace of the church.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THIS chapter treats first of the sins into which we may fall by the tongue, which we ought most seriously to observe. *St. James* teaches us here, that the tongue may be the occasion of numberless evils; that by our discourse we may sin many ways against God, and against our neighbour; and by it the edification of the church may be destroyed, and the fire of division and discord kindled. This obliges us to regulate our words by the fear of God; to speak little; to avoid above all slander and calumny; and to abstain from every thing in discourse, that is contrary to charity and humility. That this duty is of the greatest importance, *St. James* teaches us, when he remarks, that one of the surest tokens of true piety, is to know how to govern the tongue. The apostle, in this chapter, gives us another mark whereby to know those who are endowed with solid piety and true wisdom; namely, meekness and great moderation in their discourse and all their behaviour. He declares, in the strongest terms, that those who think themselves more knowing and more pious than others, but are indiscreet and insolent in their words, ill-natured, and full of envy and pride, and that speak evil of others, and occasion divisions, are only hypocrites; he says, that wherever malice and slander prevail, there is all kind of evil, and no good to be expected. Lastly, He teaches us, that the true piety, which proceeds from heaven, is pure, peaceable, moderate, full of mercy and good fruits, sincere, and without hypocrisy. All therefore who desire to be truly wise,

should

should study to acquire this divine wisdom, the foundation of which is charity, and to put on this spirit of meekness, moderation, sincerity, and peace. Thus will they experience, both in this world and the other, what St. *James* says in the last words of this chapter: *That the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for them that make peace.*

CHAP. IV.

I. ST. *James* having mentioned the evils which the tongue and a spirit of strife and dissention do produce, shews in this chapter, that all these disorders proceed from carnal passions, and particularly from the love of pleasures, from pride, from a desire of pre-eminence above others, from the love of the world, and from a spirit of envy and jealousy. II. He exhorts those in whom these passions reign, to humble themselves, and draw near to God by repentance; and he particularly forbids slandering and rash judgments. III. And lastly, He condemns those who form projects and designs, without reflecting upon the vanity of life, and without considering that they depend upon the providence of God.

REFLECTIONS.

WE learn here, I. That the love of pleasure, and our other passions, are the principal cause of those evils which men do to one another, and of the divisions that prevail in the church. Wherefore we ought to wean our hearts from these passions, and particularly from the love of the world, which is the source of all irregular desires, and from pride; remembering that the Scripture says not in vain, that *whosoever will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God*; and that *God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble*. II. We see, in this chapter, that when our passions, and the love of the world, have led us astray from God, we must draw near to him again by repentance;

ance; we must be sensible of our misery, bewail our faults, resist temptations, renounce the things of this world, and purify our hearts and all our actions; and then he will draw near to us. III. The apostle teaches us, that calumny is a great sin, since he who speaks evil of his brother, who judges and condemns him, takes upon him to do that which belongs to none but God. IV. St. *James* advises us to remember in all our designs, and particularly in those in which we have interest and advantage in view, that our life is short and uncertain, and that it vanishes away like smoke; that it is, therefore, a great folly to form remote projects, presuming upon the duration of our own lives, and upon our own industry; and that we ought to depend upon the providence of God in all things. V. We learn from hence, that it is not sufficient for us to know our duty, but that we ought to make a right use of our knowledge, and the opportunities we have of doing good; without which our knowledge will only make us more guilty before God. This is the important advice contained in these words: *He that knoweth good, and doth it not, to him it is sin.*

CHAP. V.

I. **THE** apostle having spoken, in the foregoing chapter, of those who labour to heap up riches, without considering that they depend upon Providence, denounces the judgments of God against the rich and covetous, against those that live in voluptuousness, and oppress the poor. II. He afterwards applies himself to Christians in affliction; He exhorts them to wait with patience for the coming of the Lord; not to complain too bitterly against those that did them evil; and to avoid every thing that denoted impatience, and particularly swearing. III. He shews lastly, the duty of those that are in affliction; orders those that are sick to send for the pastors of the church, and promises

promises that they shall be healed, after the pastors had prayed for them, and anointed them with oil. This anointing was a ceremony practised in those times, by the means of which God wrought miraculous cures. *St. James* speaks likewise of the confession of sin, of the efficacy of prayer, and of the fruits of brotherly reproof.

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT has been said in this chapter ought to be a warning, I. To the rich; since *St. James* threatens with the curse of God all those rich men that are covetous, unjust, or make use of their wealth to live in pomp and luxury; those to whom God has given wealth, ought carefully to avoid covetousness, injustice, and voluptuousness; and to consider the vanity of riches, the temptations to which they expose men, and the terrible misfortunes into which all those fall who set their heart upon them, or make a bad use of them. II. The apostle exhorts good men in affliction, and such was the condition of most good men at that time, to suffer without complaining and murmuring, or fretting against any one, and to wait with patience till the Lord shall please to deliver them; and he informs them, that to learn patience, it will be of great use to meditate continually upon the sufferings of the saints, and the happy issue of all their afflictions. III. This chapter teaches us, that all vain and rash oaths, of what kind soever, are absolutely forbid Christians, as well as all hasty and angry expressions. IV. That those who are afflicted, ought to seek for comfort in prayer; that sick persons should call for their pastors to pray with them; and that the confession of sins and prayer, when performed with zeal, faith, and in a spirit of love, are of great weight in the sight of God. We may learn from the last words of this Epistle, that to reprove and admonish those who live in sin and error, is of very great advantage, not only to those
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who are admonished, but likewise to those who admonish them, since thereby we deliver a soul from death, and even obtain from God the forgiveness of our own sins.

The End of the GENERAL EPISTLE of St. JAMES.

THE
FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL
OF
ST. PETER.

ARGUMENT.

St. Peter wrote this Epistle to the Christians dwelling in the provinces of Asia Minor, who were most of them dispersed Jews; and it tends to confirm them in faith and holiness. It contains several very weighty instructions, and is one of the finest Books in the New Testament.

CHAP. I.

I. **S**T. Peter praises God for having called Christians to salvation by *Christ Jesus*; for supporting them by this hope, and even filling them with joy in the midst of afflictions and persecutions. II. He shews how happy they were to know *Christ*, and to be witnesses of the accomplishment of the prophecies in the Gospel. III. He exhorts them, by divers motives, to holiness, and to a life worthy of their Christian calling.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

IN this chapter we are engaged to three principal duties. I. To render fervent and continual thanks to God for choosing us to salvation, and for giving us, by the resurrection of *Jesus Christ*, a firm and glorious hope of immortality. II. To consider seriously our happiness in knowing these mysteries, which were the expectation of the prophets, and the subject of their prophecies, and which are still the meditation and admiration of angels; God having afforded us in the Gospel, the accomplishment of those promises which the prophets had made concerning the coming of the Messiah, and the redemption of mankind. III. The third duty is to remember, that all these glorious advantages oblige us to lead a pure and holy life. To persuade us to this, *St. Peter* represents, 1. That God has delivered us from the ignorance and corruption in which men were involved when they knew not *Christ*. 2. That as God who has called us his holy, we ought likewise to be holy in our whole behaviour. 3. That the God whom we invoke as a father, is likewise our judge, and will render to all of us according to our works. 4. That we have been redeemed and consecrated to God by the precious blood of *Christ*. And, lastly, That we have received a new birth by the preaching of the Gospel, which is the word of the living God, and remains for ever. These are powerful inducements to a holy and Christian life; let us have them continually before our eyes, and let us beseech God to render them efficacious in our hearts, by the power of the Holy Spirit. *Amen;*

CHAP. II.

I. *St. Peter* exhorts Christians to live in innocence, to grow in the knowledge and grace of *Jesus Christ*, to cleave to him more and more by faith, and the imitation of his life; that so being united to him, and to each other by love, they may together compose

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one church, a temple devoted to the Lord : to engage them to which, he sets before them, on one hand, the unhappiness of unbelievers who rejected *Christ* ; and, on the other, the favour God had done them, in choosing them to be his people, consecrated to his service and to his glory. II. He exhorts them next, to renounce the desires of the flesh, and to edify the Gentiles by their good behaviour ; to submit themselves to kings and magistrates, and to love and honour all men. He recommends to Christian slaves, who served heathen masters, to be in subjection to them, and to bear with patience whatever was uneasy and disagreeable in their condition ; upon which occasion, he speaks of the obligation Christians were under to imitate the patience of *Jesus Christ*.

REFLECTIONS.

WE remark in this chapter. I. That the character of the true children of God, is innocence, meekness, simplicity, sincerity, a real aversion to wickedness and hypocrisy, and a continual desire of advancing in the grace of our Lord *Jesus Christ*. II. We have here a beautiful description of the calling of the Gentiles. *St. Peter* says, that the faithful are so many living stones, which compose a holy temple, in which there are offered spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through *Jesus Christ* ; and that the church is an assembly of kings and priests, and chosen people, a people which God has purchased to himself. This engages us to consider well the glorious condition to which God has exalted us, and to acknowledge the great goodness of God in choosing us for his people, who were formerly miserable heathens. And those noble titles given us by the apostle, should inspire us with sentiments worthy of so holy a calling, and of persons consecrated to the service and glory of God. The duties which our holy and heavenly calling requires of us, are as *St. Peter* has described them with so much beauty and energy, to shew forth the power of his grace, who has
called

called us from darkness to his marvellous light; to *abstain from fleshy lusts, that war against the soul*; remembering that we are *strangers and pilgrims here upon earth*; to edify all men by a prudent and innocent behaviour; to fear God, reverence and submit ourselves to all our superiors, and to render to all their due. Lastly, It is one of the greatest duties of Christians to suffer patiently all the evils that may be brought upon them, and to set before them the example of our Redeemer, who, though he was guilty of no sin, did notwithstanding suffer with such wonderful patience; leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps.

CHAP. III.

I. **ST. Peter** goes on with the duties of Christianity, and prescribes, I. The duties of wives and husbands. II. He exhorts all Christians to love one another, and to live in peace and innocency; assuring them that this is the way to be happy, even in this life, and in the midst of persecutions. III. To engage Christians to suffer persecutions patiently, and to make an open profession of the Gospel, he tells them what *Christ* had suffered to atone for the sins of mankind, and to bring to God the Gentiles, and people who were in bondage to sin and ignorance; that entering into the church by baptism, and becoming new creatures, they might be saved, as *Noah* and his family had been formerly in the ark, at the time of the flood.

REFLECTIONS.

I. **St. Peter** exhorts Christian women to be subject to their husbands, to behave with great meekness, to avoid luxury and immodesty in their apparel, and to be inwardly adorned with a pure, gentle, and peaceable spirit, which is of great value in the sight of God. Upon this he takes occasion to represent to the women who had husbands that were heathens, that by purity and innocence of manners, and by a modest and respectful

spectful behaviour, they might incline them to think favourably of religion, and even convert them to Christianity. Women who have the misfortune to be yoked with morose, ill-natured husbands, may learn from hence, how much piety and weakness may help to render their condition more supportable. II. He exhorts husbands to love their wives, to behave with prudence and kindness towards them, that their prayers be not hindered by their want of union. III. All Christians in general are here excited to mutual and unfeigned love, are taught to injure no one, not to revenge themselves, but to live in peace with all the world: St. *Peter* telling them, with *David*, that this is the way to make life much more agreeable, to pacify our enemies, and to be happy even when we are persecuted. IV. We see in this chapter, that one of the principal duties of a Christian is, to make a sincere profession of Christianity, to keep a good conscience, and to be always ready to give an account of our faith with meekness and respect, upon all occasions that offer themselves. V. Towards the end of this chapter St. *Peter* teaches us, that *Christ* suffered and rose again, and caused the Gospel to be preached to the Gentiles, to redeem men from the slavery of sin; and that as *Noah* was formerly saved in the ark, we are likewise saved by baptism, which procures us admittance into the church of God; whence it follows, that we cannot attain to salvation but by faith in *Christ*; that it is necessary to make a publick profession of that faith in baptism; but that baptism is not sufficient to save us, if it be not accompanied with a pure conscience. And lastly, That those who obey not the Gospel shall perish in their unbelief, like the inhabitants of the old world, who did not improve by the patience and forbearance of God, nor hearken to the preaching of *Noah*; for which reason they perished in the waters of the flood.

CHAP. IV.

ST. *Peter* teaches in this chapter, I. That the sufferings of *Jesus Christ* obliged Christians to renounce the errors in which they lived before their conversion to the Christian Religion; and particularly, the impure and dissolute life of the Gentiles; and to live in sobriety and godliness, waiting for the coming of our Lord. II. That Christians ought above all things to love and assist one another; and each one to employ to the glory of God, the different gifts he has received from him. III. That far from being surprised and discouraged at the sufferings they underwent for the Gospel, they should account them very honourable; and further, that if the faithful themselves are exposed to so many sufferings, and God spare not his church in this world, those who persecuted the faithful, and opposed the Gospel, would not escape the righteous judgment of God.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter contains several very useful instructions. I. That the consideration of what *Christ* suffered, engages us very strongly to renounce sin, and the lusts of the flesh, and particularly to avoid impurity and intemperance. II. That those who profess to fear God, ought not to think it strange if they are blamed by worldly men for not living like them, not to be moved either by their example or contempt. III. The third lesson is, always to set before our eyes the end of all things, and the last coming of our Lord, to be prepared for it by a sober life, by diligence in prayer, and by the practice of the duties of charity. IV. That we ought every one of us to make use of the different talents we have received from God, whether they be temporal or spiritual, for his glory, and for the advantage of our neighbour; and that this is what those especially, if they have any extraordinary talents, or any office in the church, are particularly

particularly obliged to. Lastly, *St. Peter* teaches us that it is both honourable and joyous to suffer as a Christian; and that if the faithful and righteous are exposed to so many evils, unbelievers and wicked men may expect much more terrible punishments. This consideration is very proper to encourage Christians to endure patiently, and even with gladness, all the evils which the profession of the Gospel brings upon them from the wicked; and to inspire us all with a dread of God's judgments, and excite us more and more to a life of holiness.

CHAP. V.

ST. *Peter* exhorts in this chapter, I. Pastors to discharge their duty. II. Young people to be in submission to their pastors and teachers, and to be humble. III. All Christians in general to live in sobriety and watchfulness, and to resist the temptations of the devil. IV. He concludes his Epistle with wishes and salutations.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter describes, I. The duty of pastors, and the glorious reward they will receive from the Lord *Jesus*, if they faithfully discharge the duties of their ministry. What *St. Peter* says on this subject, ought to engage those who are in that office to serve God with integrity, to feed the flock of the Lord, to watch carefully over the sheep with which they are intrusted, and to exercise their charge, not by constraint, nor with a view of pride or interest, but with affection, and willingly, and in such a manner as to become examples to them of humility, and all kinds of virtue. II. *St. Peter* teaches young people, that submission to their pastors belongs particularly to their age and condition; and all Christians in general are to remember, that humility is one of the principal virtues in Christianity, since *God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble*. III. We are to remark,

that our condition in this world exposes us to the temptations of the devil, and to various dangers; from which we cannot be secured without sobriety, vigilance, and continuing stedfast in the faith. Lastly, The prayer with which St. *Peter* concludes this chapter, teaches us, that the Christian profession, and the hopes of eternal glory, oblige us to aspire more and more after perfection; and that the way to attain it, is to trust in God, and to implore the continual help of his grace; beseeching *the God of peace, who has called us to his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, to make us perfect, to establish, strengthen, and settle us; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

The End of the First EPISTLE of St. PETER.

THE

SECOND EPISTLE GENERAL

OF

ST. PETER.

ARGUMENT.

It appears from this very Epistle that St. Peter wrote it a little before his death, about the year of Christ sixty-six, to confirm Christians in the faith, in sound doctrine, and the practice of good works; and to prevent their being led away by false teachers, who, to the profession of Christianity, joined a carnal life; and to put them upon their guard against certain profane persons, that called in question the second coming of Christ. This Epistle, as well as the foregoing, bears very evident marks of its divine authority, and is writ with great strength and majesty.

CHAP. I.

I. **S**T. Peter in this chapter shews, that God having given us all that is necessary to live in holiness, we ought to join to our faith the practice of Christian virtues, and that this is the only means to enter into the kingdom of God. II. He next represents to the faithful, that he exhorted them after this manner, because he foresaw that he should be soon taken away

from them by death. III. And lastly, He proves the truth of the Gospel by the transfiguration of *Jesus Christ*, and by the prophecies of the Old Testament.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

AT the beginning of this Epistle we are taught, I. That God in his goodness and power, and by the glorious promises he has given us in the Gospel, has afforded us every thing necessary to produce in us a spiritual and holy life, and make us partakers of the divine nature. St. *Peter* could not more fully prove, that the end and design of God's giving us his grace, is to make us live a godly life; that, with the assistance of God's grace, we may recover from the corruptions of the world, and even attain to a great degree of perfection; that no necessary assistance is wanting to enable us to do it; and that, therefore, we are inexcusable if we do not. II. St. *Peter* sets down particularly what our duty is in this respect, exhorting us to add to our faith prudence, temperance, patience, holiness, brotherly love, and charity; and to endeavour to make our calling and election sure; and shews the absolute necessity of all these duties, because we cannot any other way secure an entrance into the kingdom of God: but he tells us farther, that those who neglect these duties are blind, and will perish in their sins. III. The care St. *Peter* took to warn Christians before his death, shews, that they who can be useful to their neighbours, ought to endeavour it whilst they are in this world, and to double their zeal as their end draws nigh. The ministers of the Gospel ought particularly to dedicate their whole lives to this great end. IV. We see that St. *Peter* proves the truth and divinity of the Christian doctrine, by the testimony which he and his companions had rendered, of that which happened to our Lord when he was transfigured, and by the prophecies of the Old Testament. This obliges us seriously to attend to these proofs, and carefully to read and meditate on the Gospel,

Gospel, and writings of the apostles and prophets. As to the prophecies, we should consider particularly, that they were formerly somewhat obscure, but that at present they are very clear, and very proper to confirm us in the faith, and in our obedience to the doctrine and precepts of *Jesus Christ* our Saviour.

CHAP. II.

I. THE apostle foretels, that false teachers should arise, who would cause divisions, and introduce pernicious doctrines; and he shews, by the punishment of the wicked angels, by the flood, and by the destruction of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, that these deceivers, and those who followed them, should not remain unpunished. II. In the next place, he describes these false teachers as sensual persons, and such as speak evil of dignities; as unclean, addicted to covetousness; full of pride, vain and deceitful in their words; seducing the simple by their false promises of liberty; and he shews, that they involved in the greatest misery all those that hearkened to them; and who, after they had known the truth, suffered themselves to be led away by their discourses.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may learn from hence, I. That there were in all times, and always will be, false teachers, who endeavour to introduce dangerous doctrines, and to form sects and parties in the church. It was necessary this prediction should be often repeated by the apostles, that in after-ages we might not be surpris'd at the appearance of these seducers, and might take care not to fall into the snares they should lay for us. II. This chapter shews us, that God has in all ages given proofs of his justice, as appears more particularly in the punishment of the rebellious angels; in the flood; and in the destruction of *Sodom* and the neighbouring cities. These examples teach us, as the apostle says, that *the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation,*

temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished: But chiefly, that those who walk after the flesh, in the lust of uncleanness, shall receive the punishment they deserve; as is proved particularly by the destruction of the old world, and the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah. III. We are to give a particular attention to the characters by which the apostle represents these false teachers, telling us, that they were proud enemies to government, entertaining such notions of independence as tended to sedition; that they were covetous, designing men; inconstant, boasters; and, above all, addicted to sensual pleasures. This shews us, that we ought to shun those in whom we find these characters, as dangerous persons, and that we ought chiefly to abominate all such doctrines as have a tendency to these sins, and which soothe us in our vices. By which we may likewise perceive, that it is the corruption of the heart, and of the passions, which commonly engage men in error. IV. Those to whom God has given knowledge and grace, ought to improve what they learn in this chapter, namely, that when having received these advantages, they suffer themselves to be overcome by the pollutions of the world, their last condition will be worse than the first; and that it were better for them never to have known the way of righteousness, than to turn aside from it after they have known it. This is a most necessary piece of advice, and such as ought to induce even good people to a fear, attended with watchfulness and precaution, and to exert continually their utmost endeavours to keep themselves, and to improve in the way of godliness.

CHAP. III.

I. **T**HE Apostle foretels, that there should be in the church profane men; who would call in question the second coming of *Christ*. To refute these, he declares, that as the world was formerly destroyed by the waters of the flood, it would likewise one day perish
by

by fire; and that, if the coming of *Christ* were retarded, it was because God would give men time to repent.

II. He shews, that the belief and expectation of the end of all things, and the hopes of being partakers of the world to come, oblige us to unwearied endeavours after holiness and perfection.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter treats of the last coming of *Christ*, and of the end of the world; and of the effect which this doctrine ought to produce in us. Upon the former of these articles we ought to consider these four things: I. That since it has been foretold, that there would be in the last times scoffers, who would deny the most certain and most important truths of religion, we ought not to be surprised if there be some in our times; but wherever we find them, to shun them as the most dangerous and worst of men. II. That it is likewise most certain, that the world must have an end, and that *Jesus Christ* shall come at the last day to judge the world. This we have a sure proof of in the flood; which is a fact undeniable, and universally acknowledged. III. That if God delays the punishment of the ungodly, and the last judgment, it is owing to his goodness towards men, and that he may allow them time to repent, which should excite us to make a right use of the forbearance and patience of the Lord. IV. St. *Peter* teaches us, that as the world was formerly destroyed by water, it will be consumed at the last day by fire: and the description which is here made of the end of the world, shews us what will be the majesty and terror of the last appearance of the Son of God. As for the effect which this doctrine should produce, the apostle tells us, that since we know that this world is to be destroyed, and that there will be new heavens, and a new earth, in which righteousness will dwell, we cannot apply ourselves with too great earnestness to a holy life, and works of piety, so as not to be surprised by that day, and to be then found by the Lord with-

without spot or blemish. This consequence, which St. Peter draws from the end of the world, should convince us, that nothing is of more use to animate us to a holy and Christian life, than continually meditating upon the end of all things, and the universal judgment. Let us therefore never forget these instructions; and seeing we know these things before, let us beware lest we also be led away with the error of the wicked; but let us grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ: To whom be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

The End of the Second Epistle of St. PETER.

THE
FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL

OF
ST. JOHN.

ARGUMENT.

The design of St. John in this Epistle, is to secure Christians from being seduced by certain heretics, who denied that Christ was come in the flesh, and that he was the Son of God; and who lived in licentiousness. Against these St. John establishes, in this Epistle, the truth of the Gospel, and the necessity of believing in Jesus Christ; of obeying him, and especially living in charity.

CHAP. I.

I. **S**T. John, to prove that the doctrine which he and the other Apostles preached was the only true one, tells us, that neither he himself nor his colleagues had taught any thing concerning the Son of God, but what they had seen and heard themselves, having lived with *Jesus Christ*; which the false teachers could not say. II. In opposition to these heretics, he shews in the next place, that the sum and substance of the

the doctrine which he preached was, that as God is light and holiness itself, none but those who walk in holiness, who sincerely confess their sins and forsake them, have any communion with God, and with *Christ* his Son.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

I. THE first instruction we meet with in this chapter, relates to the truth of the Gospel, which appears by the certainty of the testimony of the apostles, who preached nothing but what they had seen and heard, and their hands had handled. II. We observe here, that the design of the Christian Religion is, to render men like God by holiness. This truth *St. John* declares most expressly, at the very beginning of his Epistle, when he tells us, that those who boast of being in communion with God and *Jesus Christ*, and yet remain in sin, are liars, and do not act with sincerity; and that there are none but those who, to sound faith add holiness of life, that are partakers of salvation. III. He teaches, that as all men were sinners, and God had sent his Son to save them, there was no other means to partake of the mercy of God, and of the efficacy of the blood of *Jesus Christ*, than by sincerely confessing and forsaking their sins.

CHAP. II.

THE apostle confirms in this chapter what he had advanced in the foregoing, that in order to have communion with God, we must believe in *Jesus Christ*, and live a holy life. To this end he shews, I. That *Christ* has atoned for the sins of the whole world; but that none but such as keep his commandments, and live as he lived, have any share in that atonement. II. That the chief commandment of our Lord is, to love one another; and that those who do not love their neighbour, are in darkness, and in death. III. He exhorts Christians of all ages, but particularly young people, not to love the world; because the love of the world was incon-

inconsistent with the love of God, and his Son *Jesus Christ*. IV. He advises the faithful not to suffer themselves to be seduced by impostors and antichrists, who denied that *Jesus* was the *Christ*, and the Son of God; and that they should stedfastly retain the pure doctrine, and the truth which was taught them from the beginning.

REFLECTIONS.

ST. *John* teaches us here, I. That our Lord has atoned for the sins of all mankind, and intercedes for us with God. This is a doctrine full of comfort for sinners; but it must be remembered, that the apostle confines the benefit of *Christ's* death and intercession to those that believe in him, and love him, and keep his commandments; and that he excludes those who obey him not, as hypocrites and liars. II. We are here taught, that the chief duty of Christians is to imitate their Saviour, and to live as he lived. III. That among the commandments of *Christ*, that which has the first place, and to which all the rest may be reduced, is the love of our neighbour; that they in whom this love is found, are in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in them; but that those who do not love their brother are in darkness, and in a state of condemnation. IV. The apostle teaches us, that the doctrine of *Christ* engages Christians of all ages, and all conditions, to strengthen themselves more and more in the love of God, and of *Jesus Christ*: That old men in their advanced age are not without motives to the discharge of this duty; and that in this young men should employ the strength and vigour of their youth. He exhorts young men in particular to renounce the love of the world; assuring them, that the love of riches, of pleasures, and of glory, is by no means consistent with the love of God. This is what young people ought most seriously to consider, in order to avoid the temptations to which their age exposes them; remembering for this purpose, that the
world

world passeth away, and the lusts thereof; but he that doth the will of God abideth for ever. V. The warning St. *John* gives in this chapter to beware of false teachers, that did not acknowledge *Jesus* for the Son of God, and for the Messiah, teaches us, that we ought never to hearken to those who spread doctrines contrary to the Gospel; that faith in *Jesus Christ* is absolutely necessary to salvation; and that we are not in danger of falling into error, if we have the unction of the Holy Spirit; if we inviolably adhere to the doctrine taught from the beginning by *Christ*, and by the apostles, and which is contained in the Gospel: But St. *John* informs us likewise at the same time, that faith in *Christ* engages us to live righteously and holily, that when he shall appear we may have entire confidence, and not be confounded by his presence at his coming.

CHAP. III.

IN this chapter St. *John* speaks, I. Of the love which God has shewn us in adopting us for his children, and of the glory he has reserved for us. He says, II. That the hope of this glory obliges us to purify ourselves; and that the end of *Christ's* coming was to withdraw men from sin, and to render them righteous and holy. III. He treats particularly about the love of our neighbour; he shews how necessary that virtue is, and its nature and effects; and he adds, that the surest way to obtain peace of conscience, and to be filled with confidence before God, is to love one another sincerely.

REFLECTIONS,

THIS chapter, which is one of the most instructive in the New Testament, engages us, I. To celebrate the love of God our father, who has adopted us for his children; and to consider well the advantages of our adoption, and the glory with which the children of God will be crowned at the coming of our Lord and Saviour

Saviour *Jesus Christ*. II. The apostle teaches us, that those who have such glorious hopes must purify themselves; that the design of *Christ's* coming into the world was to destroy sin; that he that is a child of God does not sin, that is, does not live in a habit of sin, nor give himself up to sin; but that he who sins is a child of the devil; and that this is a sure mark to distinguish the children of God from the children of the devil. This *St. John* declares in the most express and formal manner, warning us very seriously not to suffer ourselves to be deceived in this point. III. Of all the duties of Christianity, *St. John* chiefly insists on charity; telling us, that the love of our neighbour is the true character of Christians, and that those in whom this love is not found, and who hate their brother, are murderers like *Cain*, and remain in condemnation and death. IV. *St. John* instructs us concerning the nature and effects of true charity; informing us, that it ought not only to consist in words, but that it should be sincere and hearty, manifesting itself by its effects, and inclining us to assist our brethren, and, if it were necessary, even to lay down our lives for them, as *Christ* did for us. Lastly, The apostle teaches us, that by discharging these duties we shall be able to discover whether we are in the truth and in the love of God; and that this is the way to have peace of conscience, and a firm assurance of obtaining from him whatsoever we ask of him.

CHAP. IV.

ST. *John* warns Christians not to believe every doctrine; but to try them whether they proceed from God or not; and to assist them in the discovery, he gives them these two rules; I. First, That those who did not confess that *Jesus Christ* was come in the flesh, and was the Messiah, ought to be rejected as people animated with the spirit of the world, and of error, and not with the spirit of truth. II. The second is, That religion consists in charity, which the apostle
proves,

proves, by representing the greatness of the love which God has shewn in giving us his Son; from whence he concludes, that those who are not animated by a spirit of charity do not love God, nor belong to him, and consequently ought not to be heard.

REFLECTIONS.

CHRISTIANS may learn from hence, I. Not to receive all kind of doctrines, since there have always been impostors in the world; but to examine them, to know whether they come from God or not. This every Christian has a right to do, and it is his duty not to neglect it. II. That it is one of the fundamental truths of religion to believe, that *Jesus* is the *Christ*, and the Son of God, and that he was made man for our salvation. III. That charity is the sum and essence of religion, and the distinguishing badge of Christianity. This *St. John* repeats several times, and establishes it upon this principle, that God is love itself, and has manifested his love to men by sending his Son to give them life. By all this we may discover, that the love of our neighbour is a duty absolutely necessary; and that those who are strangers to it do not know God as they ought to know him, nor do any way belong to him. This *St. John* declares in several places, and particularly in these words: *He that says he loves God, and hateth his brother, is a liar.* This likewise shews us, that in order to produce in us this love, we should meditate upon the nature and perfections of God, who is all love; and upon that great goodness he has manifested to us, in giving us his Son to make an atonement for our sins. Since God has thus first loved us, we ought to love him most fervently, and to love one another; and by being more and more confirmed in the love of God and of our neighbour, we shall bear the image of our heavenly Father, enjoy great peace and tranquillity of mind, and have confidence at the day of judgment, and at the coming of our Lord *Jesus Christ*.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

I. **ST. John** continues to shew, that the true children of God are known by the soundness of their faith, by their obedience to his commandments, and by charity. II. He teaches that the truth of the Gospel was confirmed from heaven, by the testimony of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and upon earth, by the spirit, by water, and by blood. From whence he concludes, that the doctrine of the Gospel, and the promises of eternal life, which are made us in *Jesus Christ*, ought to be received with a full assurance of faith. III. *St. John* says, that those who had such faith were sure of obtaining from God all they should ask of him according to his will, even the health and life of their brethren; unless those for whom they prayed had committed certain sins which God thought fit to punish by a temporal death. IV. The apostle finishes this Epistle by exhorting the faithful to keep themselves pure, to continue steadfast in the faith, and to avoid idolatry, and every thing that tended to draw them into it.

REFLECTIONS.

FROM this chapter, as well as the foregoing, we may gather, I. That none are the true children of God but those who believe in his Son, who sincerely love their neighbour, and who keep his commandments. II. That the keeping of God's commandments is not a difficult or painful thing; but that, on the contrary, by the love of God, and by faith, we may easily overcome the world and temptations. III. That since the divinity of the Gospel has been confirmed in so authentic a manner, in heaven and upon earth, we shall remain without excuse if we do not receive its doctrine as divine and heavenly, and if we do not observe the duties it prescribes. IV. That those who do the will of God are sure to be heard by him; and that
their

their prayers have great efficacy, unless they should ask certain temporal blessings, which he does not think fit to grant them. This is a very valuable blessing, which ought most powerfully to excite us to obey and love God. V. St. *John* tells us, that those who are children of God do not sin; that is, do not sin as the wicked do; that sin does not reign in them; and he adds, that the wicked one has no power over them; and that they keep themselves pure, knowing that they belong to God, while the rest of the world lieth in sin and corruption. This is the duty and character of Christians, and of all the true sons of God; and this too is the only means to keep up a saving communion with God our Father, and his Son *Jesus Christ*, who is the true God, and life eternal; to whom be glory for ever. *Amen.*

The End of the First Epistle of St. JOHN.

THE
SECOND EPISTLE

OF
ST. JOHN.

ARGUMENT.

St. John writes this Epistle to a Christian lady, and to the church which was in her house. He exhorts her to persevere in the truth, and in charity; to shun false teachers, and to have no dealings with them.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may observe in this Epistle for our instruction,
I. The zeal and piety of that lady to whom St. *John* writes. This is an example which chiefly concerns Christian women, and which teaches them to adhere to godliness, and to cause it to reign in their families, as this lady did, whom St. *John* so much commends. II. We see here, that all those who know the truth, and love it sincerely, do also love one another heartily, and join, to the knowledge of the truth, obedience to the commandments of God, and the

practice of charity. III. *St. John* teaches us, that it is not enough to have begun well, and entered into the way of godliness; but that we must persevere to the end, so as not to lose the fruits of what we have done, but be qualified to receive a full reward. IV. The last instruction shews what we are to do with respect to those that teach false doctrines, and who have libertine sentiments, namely, not to receive them as brethren, but to avoid their company, and any correspondence with them, and to separate ourselves from them, and from all others, who do not live according to the precepts of the Gospel.

The End of the Second Epistle of St. JOHN.

THE
THIRD EPISTLE
OF
ST. JOHN.

ARGUMENT.

This Epistle is directed to a Christian named Gaius. St. John praises the zeal which this faithful servant of God had for the truth, and his great charity towards the brethren. He recommends to him some persons who stood in need of assistance. He complains of a certain man named Diotrephes, who was probably a bishop; and gives a good character of Demetrius.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this Epistle we may observe, I. The tender love St. John had for *Gaius* on account of his piety and charity, and his great joy to see him in so good a state. This teaches us to love and esteem those especially who fear God; and that the ministers of the Lord do never conceive more sincere pleasure, nor enjoy greater comfort, than when they know that those whom they look upon as their children do walk

in paths of truth and holiness. II. The example of *Gaius*, who received believers and strangers with so much heartiness, and whose charity had so good a favour in the church, should stir us up to do good to all our brethren, and particularly such as are persecuted for the Gospel, and are forced to flee from one city to another. III. What he says here of *Diotrephes*, who aspired at being the chief, and even opposed St. *John* himself, shews, that persons who refuse to submit to order, and especially ambitious ministers, that lord it over others, occasion great evils in the church. But, on the contrary, it is a great happiness when the ministers are humble and pious, and such as every body will speak well of, as was *Demetrius*. IV. St. *John* gives us a very important piece of advice in these words, *Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God, but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.* This is what distinguishes true Christians from impostors and deceivers, and it is by this likewise that we should examine ourselves, and regulate our behaviour.

The End of the Third Epistle of St. JOHN.

THE
EPISTLE GENERAL
OF
ST. JUDE.

ARGUMENT.

- I. *This Epistle, as well as the Second Epistle of St. Peter, which it is a kind of abridgment of, was writ against certain deceivers and prophane persons that had crept into the church, who taught damnable doctrines, and lived most licentious and irregular lives.*
- II. *The apostle St. Jude proves, by many examples, that God would not spare them. He gives a description of their sentiments and behaviour, saying, they were carnal men, and addicted to impurity, and every thing that was infamous; enemies of government and order, disobedient, quarrelsome, proud, boasters, and self-interested.*
- III. *To preserve the believers from being seduced by these profane persons, he puts them in mind of what the apostles had foretold concerning them, and exhorts them to continue in the love of God through faith and prayer; to avoid every thing that might corrupt them; and to endeavour to deliver from error those that were engaged therein; making use of meekness towards some, and of wholesome severity towards others.*

REFLECTIONS.

I. **T**HE caution which *St. Jude* gave formerly against the profane persons of his age, is not less necessary at present, since there are such a great number of libertines, who turn religion and the grace of God into dissoluteness and impiety; wherefore every one ought to be upon his guard against such persons. II. From the description which *St. Jude* gives of those profane persons, we learn, that it is a sure mark of irreligion and impiety, when men who call themselves Christians live in impurity and uncleanness, refuse to be in subjection to the higher powers, are proud and vain, and fond of independence, and make religion subservient to their interest. The apostle directs us not only to guard against the opinions and sentiments of these men, but even to avoid all intercourse with them. III. The example of the punishment which God formerly inflicted upon the rebellious angels, and upon the inhabitants of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, who had given themselves up to the most infamous pollutions; and the ancient prophecy of *Enoch*, which *St. Jude* mentions, do all prove, that such libertines and impious persons shall not escape the judgment of God, and that he will take severe vengeance on them; and that if they should escape in this life, they will not be secure from his vengeance in the next. IV. *St. Jude* teaches us, that the way to preserve ourselves from being seduced by these profane persons, is to remember that *Christ* and the apostles have warned us that there would be many such in the last times; to read and meditate on the sacred writings; and to our reading and meditation to join prayer and watchfulness, as *St. Jude* exhorts us in these admirable words: *But ye beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ*
unto

unto eternal life. Lastly, This apostle informs us, that it is not sufficient to secure ourselves from the errors of the wicked, but that charity requires, that we should endeavour to deliver others who are engaged in it; making use, to that end, either of gentleness or severity, and of all other methods that prudence and zeal may suggest to us.

The End of the Epistle of St. JUDE.

THE
REVELATION
OF
ST. JOHN THE DIVINE.

ARGUMENT.

This Book is called the Apocalypse, or Revelation, because it contains the revelation which God made to St. John in the isle of Patmos, where he was banished by the emperor Domitian. The three first chapters relate to the principal churches that were then in Asia Minor; and the following shew what was to happen in the church to the end of the world. In this Book there are some places that are pretty clear; but there are likewise visions and prophecies which are obscure and differently explained; on which we shall make no particular reflections.

CHAP. I.

I. **I**N this chapter St. John speaks of the usefulness of the prophecies contained in this book, wishes grace and peace to the seven churches of Asia, and foretels the coming of Jesus Christ. II. In the next place,

place, he relates a glorious vision, in which our Lord appeared to him, and commanded him to write, in his name, to the seven churches of *Asia*.

REFLECTIONS *after reading the chapter.*

I. THE beginning of this chapter teaches us, that the reading and meditating upon this book of the Revelation, is very profitable. Accordingly, we ought to make a good use of the things which it contains; and although we find in this book some prophecies that are hard to be understood, there are other passages in it whose sense is clear and evident, and which are very instructive. II. The prayers and thanksgivings with which St. *John* begins this book, express the sentiments of all true believers; who ought to beg the grace and peace of God for themselves and for all the churches, and to render fervent and continual thanks *unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his father.* III. St. *John's* prediction of the coming of *Christ*, shews, that the design of this book of the Revelation, is to warn men of that coming, which must be so comfortable to believers, and so dreadful to the wicked; and that we ought continually to meditate on this glorious coming of our Saviour. IV. In this magnificent appearance of our Lord, which is here related, we may observe chiefly, the majesty of *Jesus Christ*, and the care he takes of his church. This is signified in the description here made of our Lord's glorious appearance to St. *John*, and of the seven candlesticks of gold, in the midst of which *Christ* stood, which represented the seven churches of *Asia*; and the seven stars, which he held in his right hand, signified the angels, that is, the bishops and pastors of those churches. This vision, and our Lord's explanation of it to St. *John*, teaches us, that *Christ* is in the midst of his church; that he governs it; that he sees every thing that passes therein; and that its pastors are appointed

appointed by his authority. This ought to be a great inducement, not only to pastors, but to all Christians, to rely upon *Christ*, to serve him faithfully; as being always under his eye, who is the king, and supreme pastor of the church, and judge of all men.

CHAP. II. 1—11.

THIS part of the second chapter of the Revelation contains two epistles which St. *John* wrote by the order of *Jesus Christ*. I. The first is directed to the angel, that is to say, to the bishop of the church of *Ephesus*, and to all his flock. Our Lord praises the faith of that church; but reproaches them for their growing cold, and abating of their first love, and threatens to take away their candlestick, that is, to deprive them of the preaching of the Gospel. II. The second letter is directed to the church of *Smyna*. Our Lord commends her also, but foretels that she should be persecuted, and exhorts her to perseverance.

REFLECTIONS.

ON the epistles contained in this and the following chapter, we must first make these four reflections: I. That they all begin with these words, *I know thy works*; which teaches us, that the state of every church is perfectly known to *Christ*, and that he sees all the good and evil that is in it. II. That *Christ* repeats in all the epistles the following words: *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches*. This warning denotes the importance of the things which Saint *John* wrote in these epistles, by the order of our Lord, and obliges us very seriously to attend to them. III. That at the end of each epistle, our Lord makes glorious promises to those that *overcome*, that is to say, to those that conquer temptations, and persevere to the end in faith and obedience. These promises are conveyed in figurative expressions, which denote the valuable blessings which our Lord bestows on his elect in this life,

life, and the happiness he reserves for them in heaven. Lastly, That the threatenings which *Christ* denounces in these epistles against the churches of *Asia Minor*, were executed afterwards, as we see even at this day, in the sad condition to which those churches, that were formerly so flourishing, are now reduced. In the two epistles addressed to the church of *Ephesus*, and of *Smyrna*, we may observe, I. That *Christ* commends those two churches for not suffering the wicked to remain among them; by which we learn, that our Lord would not have false teachers suffered to continue in the communion of the church, any more than the vicious and sensual, such as were the *Nicolaitans*, mentioned in the epistle to the church of *Ephesus*, who were guilty of all uncleanness. II. *Christ*'s reproaches of the church of *Ephesus* for having forsaken her first love, and threatening to remove her candlestick if she did not repent, shews plainly, that God withdraws his protection from churches that grow careless and lukewarm, especially in respect of charity; and that he suffers them to be persecuted, and even destroyed, as it happened some time after to the church of *Ephesus*. III. We see in the epistle to the church of *Smyrna*, that God does sometimes expose Christians to persecution; but that it ought not to shake their constancy, since he does not abandon them in those trials, and has moreover promised to bestow a crown of life upon those that are faithful unto death.

CHAP. II. 12—29.

WE have, in this part of the second chapter, two epistles which *Christ* ordered to be wrote, one to the church of *Pergamos*, and the other to the church of *Thyatira*. I. He praises the zeal and constancy of those of the church of *Pergamos*, and exhorts them not to suffer those who retained the doctrine of *Balaam*, and of the *Nicolaitans*: these were false teachers, that drew away Christians into idolatry and

and impurity, as *Balaam* of old caused the *Israelites* to fall into the same sins, by the advice he gave to *Balak*, king of *Moab*. II. He gives the same advice to the church of *Thyatira*, under the character of *Jezebel*; by whom he understands the same seducers, who were like *Jezebel*, the wife of *Ahab*, and perhaps some woman who called herself a prophetess. He threatens them, and those that followed them, with destruction; and he exhorts this church to persevere in the purity of the faith.

REFLECTIONS.

WE may make the four following reflections upon these two epistles; I. *Christ* praises the churches of *Pergamos* and *Thyatira*, for their steadiness under persecution, which appeared more particularly in the martyrdom of *Antipas*; as also for their faith and charity; and takes notice, that their last works exceeded their first. From hence we may gather, that the glory of any church before God and man, is constancy in affliction, perseverance in faith, and progress in piety and good works. II. We see, however, that our Lord reproves these churches for suffering among them false prophets, who taught, that it was lawful to eat of things sacrificed to idols; and who, by their doctrine and example, engaged Christians in impurity, in sensuality, and idolatry. These reproaches, which *Christ* repeats more than once, shew, that we ought not to tolerate in the church such as corrupt the purity of faith and manners by pernicious doctrines, and particularly those that live in impurity, or entice others to it; and, that the churches which suffer these persons, and these offences, do what is very disagreeable to *Christ*, and draw upon themselves his indignation and wrath. III. We observe, in the epistle to the church of *Thyatira*, that God warns the false teachers, and those who were joined with them, that he gave them time to repent; but, that if they did not make a good use of his forbearance,
he

he was going to visit them with his judgments, and make them an example. Thus does God deal with the greatest sinners: he destroys them not till he has first threatened them, and bore long with them. IV. Our Lord declares expressly here, that he will judge all those who suffer themselves to be led away by error or vice; but that he will gloriously reward those who remain stedfast in their obedience to him. This is signified in the following words, which are well worthy our consideration: *All the churches shall know, that I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.—He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations;—Even as I received it of my Father.*

CHAP. III.

THIS chapter contains three epistles. I. The epistle to the church of *Sardis*; which *Christ* reproves sharply, for having only the name and appearance of Christianity; he exhorts her to repentance; threatens her, and promises his favour to those members of that church who had preserved themselves undefiled. II. The second epistle is to the church of *Philadelphia*: he praises her zeal and stedfastness, and makes her particular promises of his protection. III. The third is the epistle to the church of *Laodicea*: our Lord reproves her for her lukewarmness, and for the good opinion she had of herself; he exhorts her to get out of this dangerous state, and to improve his corrections, and the invitations of his grace.

REFLECTIONS.

I. IN the church of *Sardis*, which had the appearance of life, but was really dead, and in danger of being overtaken by the judgments of God, we have the picture of several Christian churches, that have only a shew of Christianity, and are likewise threatened to be deprived of the love and protection of
Jesus

Jesus Christ. But as there were at *Sardis* some persons who had kept themselves pure, and whom God was pleased to spare, we ought also to believe, that in the greatest depravity and corruption, there are likewise some elect, that have kept themselves undefiled, and whom God will gloriously distinguish from wicked and false Christians; which is matter of great comfort to all those who love the Lord *Jesus*, and walk in innocence, in a corrupt and depraved age.

II. In the epistle to the church of *Philadelphia*, we must observe, that our Lord praises her above all the churches of *Asia*, promising to distinguish her, and secure her from those evils with which the rest were threatened: which accordingly happened; this church being spared when the rest were destroyed, and subsisting even to this day, in a pretty happy condition. This is a very express instance of God's favour, and protection of those churches where piety prevails.

III. The epistle to the church of *Laodicea* teaches us, first, that lukewarmness in religion is altogether odious to the Lord; that he rejects lukewarm and half Christians, and that we cannot please him but by a sincere and fervent zeal. Secondly, That those, who being corrupted and dissolute, think they are in a good state, are in most danger; and that in order to extricate themselves from it, they should learn to know themselves well, to have a lively sense of their misery, and to seek for remedy in the grace, and in the Gospel of our Lord *Jesus Christ*. Thirdly, That God, in order to bring sinners to this state of repentance, corrects them in his love, and offers them his grace with much patience and goodness, as he himself expresses it in these words: *Behold, I stand at the door and knock: If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.* Let us be sensible of these invitations, which our gracious Redeemer makes us, and let us receive them with readiness and gratitude, to the end we may enjoy the blessed effects of communion with him.

CHAP. IV.

ST. *John* here relates a vision, in which God appeared to him with the tokens of his majesty; and describes the praises with which the saints and angels, here represented by the four and twenty elders, and by the four beasts, or living creatures, celebrate his glory, and give him thanks.

REFLECTIONS.

I. We see in the vision here related, on one hand, a representation of the glory and majesty of God; and on the other, the glory with which the saints and angels, who shall be in the presence of God for ever, will be crowned in heaven; which ought to inspire us with sentiments of reverence and fear for that great God whose glory fills heaven and earth; and with an ardent desire of being one day made partakers of the happiness of the saints in glory. II. As it is said in this chapter, that the saints, who were about the throne of God, did continually praise him day and night, and cast themselves down before him, worshipping him who liveth for ever; we should learn to discharge, even now, this duty, which will then be the everlasting employment of the blessed; namely, to praise God, to render him our homage, and to say always, and with all our heart; *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. — Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created.*

CHAP. V.

THIS chapter contains, I. The vision of the book sealed with seven seals, which could not be opened but by the lion of the tribe of *Judah*, and by the Lamb, that is to say, by *Christ*. II. The song of the saints in praise of our Lord.

REFLECTIONS.

IT is not easy to determine what is the exact meaning of the vision contained in this and the following chapters. However, as it is said that nobody could open this book but *Jesus Christ*, this teaches us, that since he is the author of these prophecies addressed to St. *John*, he knows the meaning of them, and will bring about the accomplishment of them. We are further to observe, that the saints in glory will be employed in praising to all eternity *Jesus Christ* our Redeemer, because he has suffered death for us, and redeemed us by his blood. Let us therefore bless him from henceforth for ever; let us join our thanksgivings to those of thousands of angels, and of all the glorified spirits; saying with them, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.—Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. Amen.*

CHAP. VI.

THIS chapter is a sequel of the vision of the book sealed with the seven seals, begun in the foregoing chapter. What is chiefly to be observed in it, are the complaints of the souls of the martyrs, and the answers which they received. Saint *John* describes next, the judgments of God upon the wicked, and their despair when God shall come to punish them.

REFLECTIONS.

THOUGH the meaning of all that is said in this chapter is not perfectly known, we may, nevertheless, make these two useful reflections upon it. I. First with regard to the complaints of those who had suffered death for the sake of *Jesus Christ*, and the answer they received. The design of this vision was to comfort the faithful under persecution, and to teach Christians

Christians not to think it strange if God suffered his saints to be persecuted, and their blood to be shed, and did not immediately take vengeance on their persecutors: that God dealt thus with them for wise and just reasons; and that he would not fail to avenge them, when the number of their brethren should be accomplished; and that in the mean time, the souls of his saints are preserved after death, and enjoy rest, in expectation of the day of their final deliverance, and of their glory. II. We have in the second part of this chapter an emblem of the end of the world, and of the last judgment; and particularly we observe in it a lively description of the terror and despair with which those who persecute the faithful, and all the other enemies of God, will be seized at that day; which is pathetically described in these words: *They hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?* Let these expressions be often present to our minds, that they may keep up in us a religious dread, which will be of great use to direct us to avoid that terrible condemnation and despair, which will one day be the portion of the wicked, and of all the enemies of our Lord.

CHAP. VII.

I. GOD forbids the angels of his wrath to hurt his elect. II. St. John represents the happiness and triumph of the saints, and particularly for those that shall have suffered for the truth.

REFLECTIONS.

I. THOUGH we do not know exactly what the first verses of this chapter relate to, yet we may conclude from the command which was given to the angels, to do no harm to God's elect, who were

marked with his seal, that God knows all his faithful servants, that they are very dear to him, and that he spares them when he visits the inhabitants of the earth with his judgments; and, above all, that he will secure them from his wrath at the last day. II. This chapter represents, in a very affecting manner, the triumph and glory of the blessed, and particularly of the martyrs that shall have suffered for *Christ*; the joy that shall be heaped upon them after their labours, and the felicity which God reserves for them. To this purpose, *St. John* tells us, that they shall be before the throne of God; and *shall serve him day and night in his temple; and that he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them; that they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more;—for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto fountains of living waters; and that God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.* This supreme, this everlasting felicity, is destined not only for martyrs, but is reserved by God for all those that shall keep themselves pure in this world, and shall glorify him by their patience and obedience. Therefore these words of *St. John* ought to fill all true Christians with joy and consolation, raise in them an ardent desire, and a firm expectation of that great glory, and excite them more and more to holiness and the love of God.

CHAP. XIV.

WHAT we are going to read sets before us, I. The joy and happiness of those who have been found faithful to the Lamb, and have kept themselves pure; and their thanksgivings to God when they shall see his kingdom perfectly established, and that of Satan destroyed. II. The fall of the mystical *Babylon*, the punishment of those who shall be partakers of its errors and its crimes, and the happiness of those who die in the Lord. III. The vision of the harvest and of the vintage.

REFLECTIONS.

I. WHAT we are to consider upon this chapter is, that St. *John* said, he saw a multitude of the elect of God standing in his presence, and singing a new song before his throne; but that none could sing this song, save those who had not defiled themselves, who had followed the Lamb, and in whom no guile was to be found. This teaches us, that the happiness of the saints will be infinite, and that they shall be for ever with God; but that none can be admitted to this sovereign happiness, and to the communion of the blessed, but those who shall have kept themselves pure, and have renounced themselves, bearing their cross, and constantly following *Christ* their Saviour. II. We learn from hence, that the time will come, when the spiritual *Babylon* shall be destroyed, with all those that have been partakers of its idolatries and abominations; and that the punishment of the enemies of the church, of apostates, and of the wicked in general, will endure for ever and ever. III. The spirit of God declares in this chapter, that those who die in the Lord are blessed, that they rest from their labours, and that their works follow them. These assurances from the spirit of God, of the happy state of believers after death, are a great consolation to true Christians, and should stir us up to a holy life, to the end we may look upon death with confidence, and enjoy that rest and happiness which is prepared for those who live and die in the Lord.

CHAP. XX.

THIS chapter has two parts. I. In the former, St. *John* foretels that Satan should be bound, and that *Christ* should reign with the saints and martyrs a thousand years. II. In the latter he speaks of the last judgment.

REFLECTIONS.

IN this chapter we have two very remarkable prophecies. I. The first is, that Satan should be bound for the space of a thousand years, and that then our Lord would reign gloriously with the martyrs and saints. Now, though we do not well know the whole meaning of this prophecy, yet it seems to imply, that there will be a time when the church shall enjoy rest, and shall be more pure and holy than it has ever been; and that then the saints, and especially the martyrs, shall be crowned with great glory. This will come to pass when all nations are converted, and the kingdom of antichrist destroyed, and the Lord shall reign gloriously in his church; after which Satan shall be loosed, and the church shall undergo some persecution before the end of the world. II. The second prophecy relates to the last judgment. We see by what *St. John* says of it, the majesty in which *Christ* will appear at that day; the general resurrection of all men; their standing before the throne of our Lord, who will judge all according to their works, and the issue of his judgment, viz. that the wicked shall be cast into the lake of fire, and the righteous made partakers of eternal life. These great truths ought to be always present to our minds, and engage us to pray, and to labour continually to improve in piety, that at that day, so formidable to the wicked, we may appear before our Lord with confidence, and our names found in the book of life.

CHAP. XXI.

I. *St. John* here describes the renovation of all things, which will be at the end of the world; the joy prepared for the righteous, and the punishments which are reserved for the wicked. II. He represents next, in figurative terms, and by magnificent images,

images, the heavenly *Jerusalem*, the glory of God's kingdom, and the eternal happiness of the elect.

REFLECTIONS.

THE description St. *John* gives of the new *Jerusalem*, teaches us, that at the end of ages all things will be renewed, and that then the kingdom of God, and of his saints, will appear in all its glory; and we may judge by the great and splendid images, which the spirit of God makes use of in this chapter, what will be the beauty and magnificence of that glorious habitation to which the saints shall be admitted; where God will dwell with them, where he will wipe away all tears from their eyes, and where he himself will be their glory and their happiness. This ought to excite in us an ardent desire to be of the number of those that shall be received into the heavenly *Jerusalem*. And since it is written, that no polluted thing shall enter therein, and that the portion of unbelievers, of the timorous, of unclean persons, of murderers, of idolators, of liars, and of other sinners, shall be the lake burning with fire and brimstone; let us with great zeal endeavour to purify ourselves, that we may be thought worthy to be admitted into heaven to behold its beauties, and to be put in possession of that supreme beatitude, which Saint *John* in this chapter gives a description of.

CHAP. XXII.

I. ST. *John* continues to describe the glory of the heavenly *Jerusalem*. II. The angel confirms to him the truth of the prophecies contained in this book, and commands him to publish them. III. *Jesus Christ* declares, he would come quickly to receive the saints into his glory, and to punish the wicked; and St. *John* expresses how ardently the faithful desire the coming of their Saviour.

REFLECTIONS.

THIS chapter which is the last of the Revelation, and of all the holy writings, sets before our eyes, the end and consummation of all things. We here see, how great will be the glory and happiness which the elect will eternally enjoy in the presence of God, and of *Jesus Christ* their Saviour: and we also learn, that none will be admitted to this happiness but those who endeavour after it, and who keep the commandments of God; but that the impure, and the wicked in general, shall be excluded from it for ever. Thus we see what will be one day the lot of good and bad men, and what God proposes to do at the end of the world. Since he has so expressly warned us of it, let us be continually meditating upon it; let us remember, that all these things are most certain, and that God revealed them to *St. John*, and was pleased they should be written in this book, for the instruction and edification of the church in all ages. II. It is said in this chapter, that when *St. John* was going to throw himself at the angel's feet, who talked with him, the angel said unto him, *See thou do it; for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets; worship God.* This proves, that it is unlawful to worship any but God, in any manner whatever; and that, therefore, all religious worship paid to angels or saints must be very sinful. III. It must be observed, that the angel told *St. John*, that the truths contained in this Book would not produce the same effect upon all; that the wicked would corrupt and defile themselves daily more and more, whilst the righteous and the saints are continually improving in holiness. This we see daily happen; but let us remember, that the Lord has forewarned us of it, and that he will at length come to judge both the righteous and the wicked, as he himself has declared at the end of this Book, saying, *Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.*

Let

Let us continually pant after his coming, and while we wait for it, let us persevere in well-doing, and let us say with the bride, which is the church, and with all her true children, *Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.* Amen.

Here ends the New Testament.

God grant us grace to make a good use of all that we have here read and heard, to meditate upon it, and to practice it our whole lives, to the glory of God our Father, and to the advancement of our own salvation.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all,
Amen.

FINIS.

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